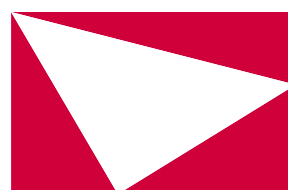


# **Community Councils online**

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**Institute for  
Informatics  
& Digital  
Innovation**

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**Part of Edinburgh Napier University**

# Community Councils online

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document reports the results of a survey, carried out in late spring 2014, of the public web presences of potentially over 1300 Scottish Community Councils (CCs). It follows on from similar survey in summer 2012 (Ryan & Cruickshank, 2012).

The research found that there has been almost no positive change since 2012. The 2012 research concentrated on content-types associated with up-to-date presences. This report does the same, but also examines Community Councils' social media use and builds archetypes which may be used to derive models and examples of good practice, and create recommendations for Community Councils and their Local Authorities (LAs).

Key findings are that the 1369 potential Community Councils can be broken down as follows:

- 211 (15%) do not exist (In 2012, 222 [16%] did not exist.)
- 503 (37%) exist but are not online (2012: 490 [36%])
- 348 (25%) are online but do not have up to date presences (2012: 349 [25%])
- Only 307 (22%) have an up to date presences. Of these, only 162 were also up to date in 2012, showing CCs have a real problem in maintaining an online presence.

Overall, it can be seen that there is little evidence of progress since 2012. Worse than that, there is a high level of churn: while 125 (9%) are newly online, 139 (10%) of Community Councils have ceased updating their websites – an indication of how challenging CCs are finding it to maintain a presence.

73 presences (11% of presences) do not provide ways for citizens to contact their Community Councillors. Only 12% use social media to host online discussion and opinion-gathering.

Community councils' main role is to represent their communities in the local planning process. Despite this, only 13% had any information on this core area – however this is an improvement on 2012.

We found that many actively online CCs publish news; many can also be seen as acting as either representative institutions or campaigning groups (but generally not both). This is an area for further research.

Despite the increase in the use of mobile phones and tablets for accessing the internet, online presences are still mostly websites aimed at desktop/laptop browsers.

Performance varies significantly between local authorities (LAs) but even the best (Moray) has only 65% Community Councils actively online. West Dunbarton has none *actively* online, and Dundee, Eilean Siar, Orkney and West Lothian are at 5%. Related to this, there is some evidence that the LAs' published CC schemes can positively influence their use of the internet.

The three Community Councils we found that have sustained the most developed, consistent presences are:

- Eilean Siar: Pairc
- Fife: Burntisland
- Glasgow: Dennistoun

A good way forward would be for CCs to emulate and adapt the examples of good practice we have identified by publishing minutes, news, planning and local area information, limiting publication of other types of content, and using social media to engage with citizens.

We also make a number of broader recommendations to LAs, including that that they publish CC schemes on their websites, provide training in online methods and work together via their CCLOs and IT teams to support CCs.

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# Community Councils online

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## GLOSSARY

AO	actively online
CAO	consistently actively online
CC	Community Council
CCLO	Community Council Liaison Officer
IS	Improvement Service
LA	Local Authority
PC	(English) Parish Council
SG	Scottish Government
SLWG	short-life working group

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This report is aimed at finding and promoting models of good online practice by CCs. It analyses changes between 2012 and 2014 in how CCs present themselves online, looking at the overall situation and the state of play within individual Local Authorities (LAs), and finds individual CCs that have sustainable methods of engaging with their citizens. Follow-up research will investigate sustainable methods for engagement.

### 1.1 RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN COMMUNITY COUNCILS AND OTHER GOVERNMENT BODIES

Our 2012 report includes a fuller introduction to CCs (Ryan & Cruickshank, 2012). This report focusses on changes since 2012 and consideration of possible new factors behind the levels of uptake, and changes in them.

CCs are voluntary, nominally elected bodies established by local government legislation, whose main aims are to ascertain, co-ordinate and express opinions from the communities they represent, especially about spatial planning, and act on behalf of their communities in 'expedient and practical' manners; they have no tax-raising powers or service-provision duties (UK Government, 1973). All LAs have produced and implemented CC schemes. These in general are enabling rather than circumscribing frameworks.

CCs were given a statutory right to be consulted on spatial planning issues in the Local Government etc (Scotland) Act 1994 (UK Government, 1994). They receive lists of planning applications from their LAs (Scottish Government, 2011), and may request formal consultation on any application. CC submissions will not always be implemented on final versions of plans: for example, approved development plans may overrule CCs' comments. The Scottish Government's Planning Reporter may also overrule LAs' planning decisions, no matter how strongly CCs support such decisions. A fuller description of CCs' role in the planning process is given in (Edinburgh Council, 2014).

In practice, contacts between LAs and their CCs are managed through officials known as Community Council Liaison Officers (CCLOs). CCLO duties include responsibilities for:

- development of CCs; providing information, support and advice to enable them to represent their communities effectively; liaison with the LA, its elected members and officials; development and delivery of training courses for Community Councillors, and
- ensuring that all legislative and procedural compliances are met; facilitating effective CC engagement with their LAs, other public bodies and private agencies.

The importance of CCs can be assessed by the resources LAs put into developing and consulting their CCs. For example, Edinburgh CCs were recently consulted about changes to health and social care. More recently, Edinburgh's CCLO circulated a questionnaire investigating CCs' engagement with their citizens. This may be a device to prompt CCs into undertaking better engagement, and justifying the opinions they submit to Edinburgh Council. It is likely that other Local Authorities are taking similar actions.

The Improvement Service (IS), a body funded by the Scottish government and local authorities with a remit to help improve the efficiency, quality and accountability of local public services in Scotland has been taking an increasing role in supporting the development of CCs, including improvements to the Community Council 'brand'. This IS is working towards an online portal for information on CCs.

A Scottish Government short-life working group (SLWG) report into CCs was published shortly before our 2012 report was issued. A number of its recommendations are relevant to this report:

- That the expected role of a local authority in supporting its Community Councils, including the remit of the CCLO, **is publicly available and that a local authority official with suitable seniority** is identified to ensure that both the Community Council work and working relationship is appropriately progressed at local authority level.
- That a national level induction pack is available to all Community Councillors, including model **training modules relevant to Community Council activity** and required training standards for delivery at local level, including a way to instil amongst Community Councils a sense of responsibility to undertake training.
- That a **national interactive portal** providing a central information site offering and signposting support and guidance on issues pertinent to Community Councils be developed.
- That Community Councils are encouraged and supported to **engage, communicate and network** in a wide range of different ways, including digitally and via various social networking mediums to enable them to embrace a wider community audience.
- That **good practice developed across the country** is shared to support and strengthen Community Councillors' role as contributors to the design and delivery of public services/asset managers and to further minimise the risk of personal liability faced by Community Councillors.

(Scottish Government, 2012a) Emphasis not in original

Many of these recommendations appear not to have been progressed fully – see section 4.

# Community Councils online

There have been several initiatives looking into the role of local government in Scotland, though their consideration of CCs has been limited. These include the Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy (Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy, 2014) and the Scottish Parliament's Local Government and Regeneration Committee inquiry (Scottish Parliament (Local Government and Regeneration Committee), 2014).

## 1.2 PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Details of the history of CCs and other past initiatives in the area can be found in our previous report (Ryan & Cruickshank, 2012, pp6-7).

Almost a decade ago, it was shown that there was significant appetite among citizens for CCs to use the internet to engage with citizens. At that time, few Community Councillors had the necessary skills and a role was seen for LAs to 'take a proactive stance in disseminating e-democracy tools' (Whyte, Macintosh, & Shell, 2006). Despite the vast increase in online resources available to CCs, the fundamental issues remain unchanged for the majority.

Our 2012 Survey of CC's online presences (Ryan & Cruickshank, 2012) showed that under a quarter (22%) of CCs maintain up-to-date online public presences and used them to communicate one way – from CC to citizen. Only 10% used social media to host online discussion and opinion-gathering. Other findings were that:

- Only 4% of CCs made planning content easily available online, despite CCs' key importance in the planning process.
- Although LA-hosted presences ensured that existent CCs actually had presences, they appeared to limit the types of content that CCs could publish to minutes, members names and minimal contact details. In contrast, CCs that maintained their own presences were able to publish information about their areas, local news and many other types of content of potential interest to local citizens and others.
- The difference between a successfully online CC and one that was not so was due to whether the CC was lucky enough to have a member interested in taking on such work. The effect of this is that CC online presences were generally fragile.

Research into strengthening local democracy suggests *inter alia* need for transparency around decision-making, and meaningful collaboration between CCs and LAs, ongoing communication and networking by CCs so that their public profiles are raised (Escobar, 2014). Training around such matters would be needed.

## 2 OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

This project had two objectives: the first was to investigate changes since summer 2012 in how CCs present themselves online and use the internet to engage with their constituents. The second was to find models and examples of good practice. This project concerns only CCs' public online behaviour – private and offline activities are beyond its scope.

This report is based on a snapshot of CC public online activity in May to early June 2014. Lists of CCs developed in the 2012 survey were refined using lists of CCs on LA websites. If the LA sites contained links to CC websites, these were followed. Each CC was also searched for in Google. It was assumed that if a CC had a Facebook or Twitter presence, this would be seen on its websites. However, some CCs were found to use social media only.

If an online presence was found, data on its timeliness, content, host and control and other such characteristics were collected. The method used for data collection is explained in detail in Appendix 1: .

The URLs of all CC websites and Facebook pages found in this research were collected, along with all Twitter handles. Each LA's results were forwarded to its CCLO for verification of the existent and non-existent CCs. As in 2012, CCs were classified into four statuses: those that did not exist; those that existed but were not online; those that existed and had out-of-date online presences; those that existed and had up-to-date online presences. Subdivisions of the up-to-date status were developed for the current report:

- **Actively online (AO):** those CCs which had up-to-date presences which were updated monthly or more often. This was to exclude those CCs which had coincidentally updated their presences within two months before the survey but were unlikely to regularly add information.
- **Consistently actively online (CAO):** those CCs which were actively online in both 2012 and 2014. This was to understand how many CCs have been able to maintain engagement with their citizens over the medium term.

Explanations of CCs' online behaviour were sought in the types of content they published, and the CC schemes created by LAs.



## 3 FINDINGS

This section highlights our key findings. Data tables underpinning these findings are in Appendix 2. As well as the 'does not exist', 'exists but not online', 'online, out of date' and 'online, up to date' statuses used in the 2012 survey, we use two new derived statuses: **Actively Online** CCs (AO CCs) – those CCs that have up to date presences which are updated monthly or more often – and **Consistently Actively Online** CCs (CAO CCs) – those CCs that were actively online in 2012 and 2014. In brief, there are currently 211 CCs (15%) that do not exist, 503 CCs (37%) that exist but are not online, and 655 CCs (48%) that have online presences. Only 307 of these (22%) are up to date – of these 292 CCs (21%) are actively online.

We address immediate calls for action first – whether CCs publish key information – followed by consideration of whether CCs plan their presences and whether LAs can make a difference.

### 3.1 SOME ONLINE CCs DO NOT ENABLE CITIZENS TO CONTACT THEM

427 of the 655 online presences appear to list the names of their members. (There was no means of checking whether such lists are accurate.) 248 CCs publish specific contact details for some or all office-bearers, while only 130 publish contact details for all members. However, 541 presences have either general contact email addresses or contact forms, or contact details for specific office-bearers. Assuming that social media presences are also ways of contacting CCs, the full number of contactable CCs is 582. This leaves 73 presences which do not enable citizens to contact their CCs, while some of the contact means are only postal addresses or phone numbers.

Restricting interest to the 292 AO CCs, 17 presences (6% of AO CCs) do not have any form of contact mechanism. Hence actively online CCs are more likely than other online CCs to have contact details. It is understandable that members may not wish their personal email addresses to be published. Also, when office-bearers retire, presences including their personal email addresses will need to be updated.

Also, it is understandable that not all Community Councillors are contactable in this way. CCs are relatively small organisations, and hence may only need a single point of contact, or contact details for office-bearers. Indeed, the Edinburgh scheme (Edinburgh Council, 2013b) notes that CC secretaries are likely to handle almost all correspondence, though it is clear that some online CCs cannot be contacted by online means.

### 3.2 CCs' ONLINE BEHAVIOURS DO NOT FULFIL THEIR KEY ROLE OF BEING PART OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

CCs have a statutory right to be consulted on spatial planning matters. This role is exemplified by LAs regularly sending information on new planning proposals to CCs, and by mechanisms such as Edinburgh's Planning Concordat (Edinburgh Council, 2013a). Arguably the most important part of this concordat is the offer of financial support for CCs who wish to gather community opinions at early stages of large individual planning applications.<sup>1</sup> Given this emphasis on CCs' planning duty, reiterated in many LA schemes, and the general duty of CCs to ascertain, co-ordinate and express community opinions, it can be concluded that CCs are supposed to gather and represent their citizens' opinions on planning matters – not just their members' own views.

Having said this, the authors' personal experience and conversations with other Community Councillors suggest firstly that there is not time to consult citizens on routine planning applications by traditional means, and that CCs can only involve themselves with small proportions of planning applications. For example, despite the planning of one CC committee meeting fortnightly, it could only concern itself with applications that either broke the guidelines pertaining to that city's conservation area or that would affect significant numbers of people (for example the site of a new hospital).

Also, several CCs have planning committees in which their members who have personal interests in planning can bring their expertise to bear. For example, in 2013 the planning committee of Leith Central CC was arguably the loudest voice behind the creation of Pilrig conservation area in Edinburgh. At the time, this committee was led by a former planner.

Hence it can be argued that at minimum CCs have a duty to inform their citizens about local planning matters and their reactions to these, preferably in distinct planning sections of their online presences. For example, word-processed planning submissions to CC-controlled presences could be posted to such sections. Enhancements would include inviting citizen comment using blogging platforms' comment and polling facilities, developing emailing lists of interested local citizens and then emailing them about planning issues, and tweeting about such matters. Such planning features could facilitate gathering of citizens input within the timescales for commenting on planning applications. This would exclude 'offline' citizens but such issues are beyond the scope of this report.

However, the reality is that only 176 presences (27% of all presences) clearly present planning information. Other online CCs may have planning information but there is no easy way to find this except by

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<sup>1</sup> This support is only available if developers will not fund such opinion-gathering.

## Community Councils online

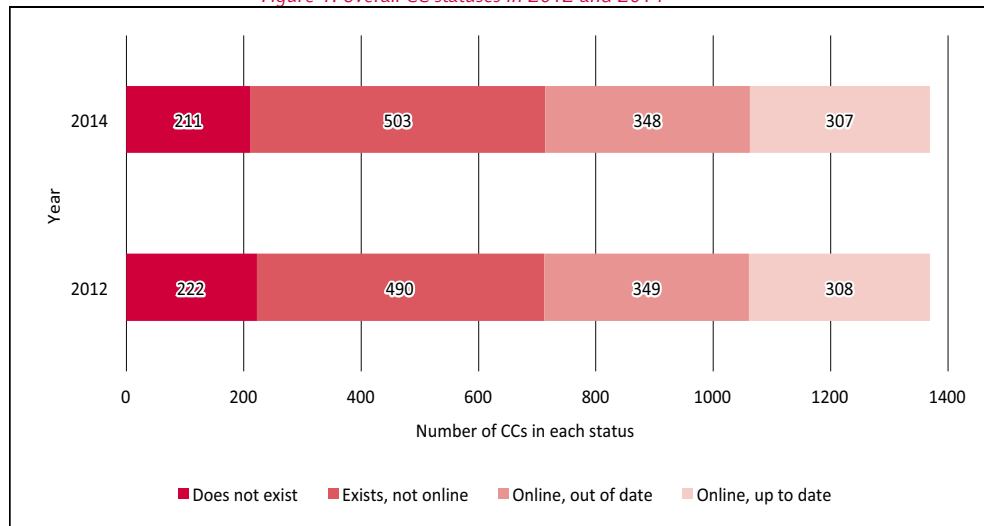
downloading their minutes. Of these 176 planning-presenting CCs, 111 are actively online. The numbers of actively online, planning-presenting CCs in each LA is given in Table 1. Edinburgh's 41% stands out, while Clackmannanshire, Dundee, East Ayrshire, Moray, Orkney, Shetland and West Dunbartonshire all have no such CCs. However, this may be unsurprising given that the latter group of LAs muster only 27 actively online CCs between them.

In summary, CCs generally do not use online presences to inform their citizens about planning matters, let alone seek community opinions on such matters.

### 3.3 CCs APPEAR TO STRUGGLE TO MAINTAIN ONLINE PRESENCES

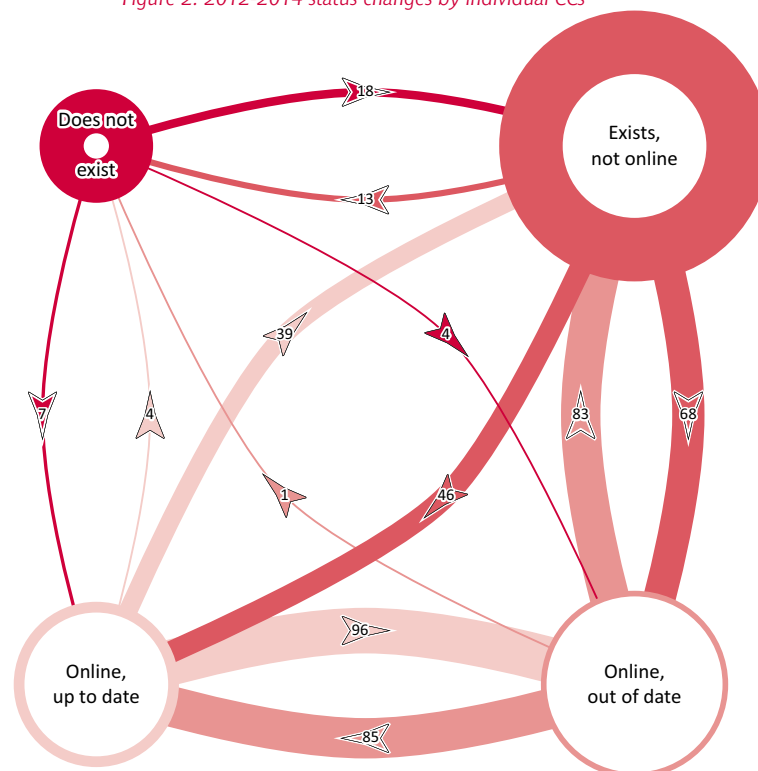
Figure 1 shows how little overall change has occurred between 2012 and 2014. There is still only a small minority (22%) of CCs with up-to-date online presences. Only 11 more CCs have come into existence since 2012 but there are slightly fewer that are online in any way.

Figure 1: overall CC statuses in 2012 and 2014



Beneath this seemingly unchanging surface, however, there is a high rate of 'churn', as pictured in Figure 2.

Figure 2: 2012-2014 status changes by individual CCs



The rings' outer diameters represent the numbers in each status in 2014. Inner diameters represent the amount of 'churn', i.e. the sum of the numbers that left or entered this status since 2012. Total numbers can be found in Figure 1 above.



The outstanding observation is that while 1129 CCs existed in both years, 34% of them have changed status in just under 2 years; 193 remained non-existent in both years. It is notable that 68 CCs moved from 'exists, not online' to 'online, out of date': such CCs must have gone online since summer 2012 but then let their presences lapse in under 2 years. This may be due to turnover of individual Community Councillors – if webmasters leave and are not replaced, presences will falter. However, if it is due to individual webmasters ceasing such work, or entire CCs giving up on online representation and engagement, there will be significant reductions in self-efficacy to overcome if these CCs are to return to the internet. Hence work to persuade these CCs to come back online could well be harder.

In summary, 139 CCs that had online, up to date presences in summer 2012 had effectively disappeared from the internet by spring 2014. That is, 45% of viable presences have failed. Such CCs may well be reluctant to try to go online again.

### 3.4 ONLINE PRESENCES ARE STILL MOSTLY WEBSITES AIMED AT DESKTOP/LAPTOP BROWSERS

A range of hosting options are used but social media is still not significant, and mobile devices are generally not catered for.

#### 3.4.1 *CCs do not use social media to engage with citizens*

We found that 30% of actively online CCs use more than one digital channel, e.g. a website, a Facebook page and a Twitter account. We classified these AO CCs firstly according to how many channels they use. The next division is according to whether the presence is fully controlled by its CC or whether there is an element of ownership by an LA, CC association or community website. Finally, those CCs using just Facebook and/or Twitter are split out.

181 of the 292 AO CCs only had websites, while 33 used only social media and 78 use social media in addition to websites. 23 AO CCs only had LA-hosted websites while just 8 AO CCs used social media in addition to LA-hosted websites. (Details are given in Table 2.)

Clearly the absolute number of CCs using social media is low – only 111 actively online CCs use social media. However, these represent 38% of the actively online CCs, while only 14% of the other (less actively) online CCs use social media. Hence social media use is associated with CCs being actively online.

In passing, we note that the four actively online CCs that only use Twitter will be hard-pressed to continue to present documents such as minutes to their followers: while it may be possible to attach documents such as minutes to tweets, such tweets are likely to become rapidly buried in followers' twitstreams.

Also, many CC Facebook channels are not set up appropriately: official presences on Facebook should be 'pages' (Facebook, n.d.). Of the 130 presences with Facebook channels, only 51 have 'pages' in their URLs and so appear to be set up appropriately. To be fair, this mistake appears to be easy to make: when one of the authors investigated the ease of setting up a CC online presence (Ryan, 2013, pp99-106), he did not encounter any advice on this topic.

# Community Councils online

## 3.4.2 Lack of mobile device support

Arguably, one of the most beneficial recent IT developments is the rise of mobile internet devices, that is smartphones and tablets, enabling access to online information via low-cost devices wherever a Wi-Fi or mobile data network can be found. Technologies have been developed to enable online presences to work within the confines of smartphones' small screen sizes. For example, content may be automatically magnified for increased legibility (Figure 3, Figure 4), while menus of pages within websites may be presented in smartphone-friendly manners (Figure 5). Such features are automatically provided by platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and some blogging sites such as wordpress.com, and by Facebook and Twitter smartphone applications.

Figure 3: CC website as presented on laptop



Figure 4: content automatically resized for smartphone



Figure 5: menu automatically transformed for smartphone



Relatively few CCs have chosen platforms that cater for mobile users: only 142 AO presences have discernable mobile versions – though being in the AO category seems to be correlated with increased likelihood of supporting mobile users. Social media services mean that around half of actively online CCs have mobile channels by default.

Falkirk Council provides an example of the complexity in understanding mobile-supporting presences. All of the Council's website supports mobile, so the fact that the CCs hosted on its website are in this category is not deliberate choice by the CCs. The same is true for LA-hosted presences in East Renfrewshire and Moray. On the other hand the Inverclyde, Orkney and Shetland LA websites do not support mobile so the CC hosted on them cannot do so.

We found that some presences hosted by wordpress.com appeared to have the automatic mobile version switched off. We can think of no advantage to this choice.

# Community Councils online

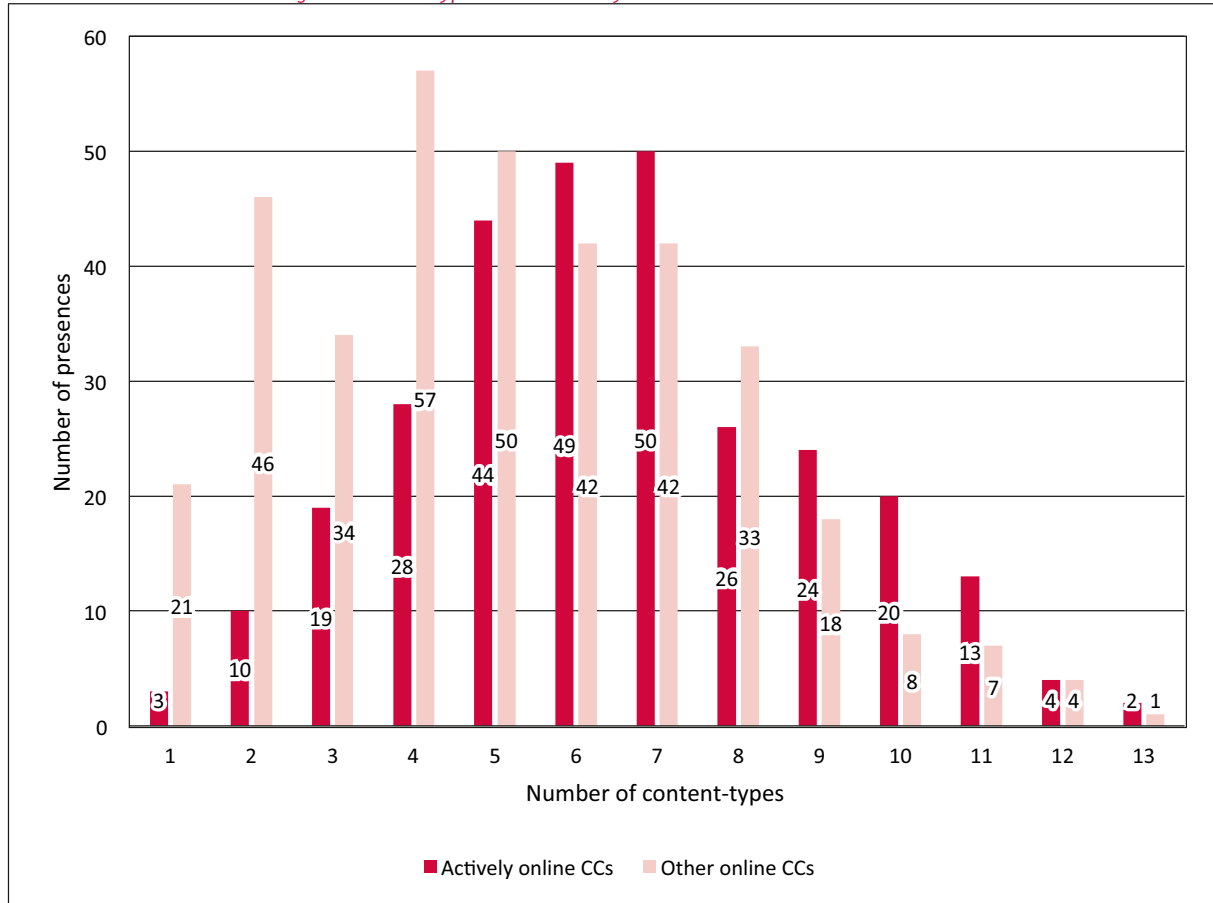
## 3.5 ACTIVE CCs HAVE A RANGE OF ONLINE CONTENT BASED AROUND MINUTES, NEWS AND LOCAL INFORMATION

This research extended the content-types investigated in the 2012 survey by noting use of media such as maps, videos and photos – detail of the content types investigated is given in Table 3.

In summary, actively online CCs are around 20% more likely to publish minutes, news and local area information (the ‘big 3’): 51% vs 29%, and around 10% more likely to publish maps and other content.

The numbers of different content-types published by AO and other online CCs vary as shown in Figure 6: the AO CCs have a slightly wider range of content types (median 6) than those that are not actively online (median 5), but at the same time publish the ‘big 3’ along with 3 other types of content. Meanwhile other CCs tend to publish fewer types of content, and shy away from potentially more crucial content-types.

Figure 6: content type totals for actively online and other online CCs



Concerning the question of good practice, we divided the content-types into ‘CC-centric’ (those that are unique to distinctive for their online presences) and ‘CC-peripheral’ (content could potentially be found elsewhere) – see Table 4. The numbers of AO and other online CCs publishing each content-type are given in Table 5.

The proportions of CCs publishing CC-centric content has remained high, but there has been a large increase in the number of non-AO online CCs with CC-peripheral content. In fact, such presences may be falling into abeyance because their webmasters realise how little value they have to citizens – limited content and what is there is out of date – leading to the churn noted in section 3.3 above.

# Community Councils online

## 3.6 NEWS IS AT THE CORE OF ONLINE PRESENCES

As well as simply gathering and representing community opinions, CCs are encouraged to act on behalf of their communities. For example, Aberdeen City Council states that its CCs can:

- get things done in the community
- take on the other tiers of government
- raise funds to support particular projects
- allocate resources within the community.

(Aberdeen City Council, 2012, p9)

Logically, if CCs are pursuing such aims, they should use their online presences to help achieve them. Also, many CCs publish news and other local information, and act or campaign on behalf of their citizens. CCs are nominally elected representative bodies, while the schemes established by LAs encourage them to act openly; this topic is investigated further in section 3.8. Some also publish details of other relevant elected representatives (LA councillors, MSPs, MPs).

To investigate whether CCs actually were using their presences to support specific aims, and to try to discern motivations behind the wide variety of content-types found (Table 4 and Table 6), three non-exclusive archetypes were hypothesised (Cruickshank, Ryan, & Smith, 2014). The names, definitions and justifications for the potential archetypes are:

- **Journalist:** *has news content*  
Many presences have news content, so it was hypothesised that CCs might concentrate on online (hyperlocal) journalism to inform their citizens.
- **Charity/campaigner:** *has campaign content*  
In common with many charities and campaigning groups, CCs are composed of volunteers, and may set out to 'get things done in the community' and 'raise funds to support particular projects'. This simple measure singled out those CCs that definitely used their online presences to support their chosen campaigns, and that tried to keep their putative stakeholders well informed.
- **Local government/open:** *publishes members' names, minutes, planning information, and some form of contact mechanism*  
Governments can be defined as geographically-based bodies that aim to represent the populations of their areas, make and enforce regulations, provide services for their populations and levy taxes to fund these activities. Clearly CCs do not fulfil this definition. Indeed at least one scheme for CCs states clearly that CCs are not part of local government (Glasgow City Council, 2013)

However, many CC schemes state that CCs should embrace openness, and provide evidence for the opinions they express. Another potential aim for CCs is to 'allocate resources within the community', while some CC schemes state that Community Councillors are as elected as are LA councillors, MSPs and MPs (Aberdeen City Council, 2012, p1). Hence while CCs cannot **fully** act as local governments, it is apparent that within certain limits they are called on to act as such as if they **are** local governments.

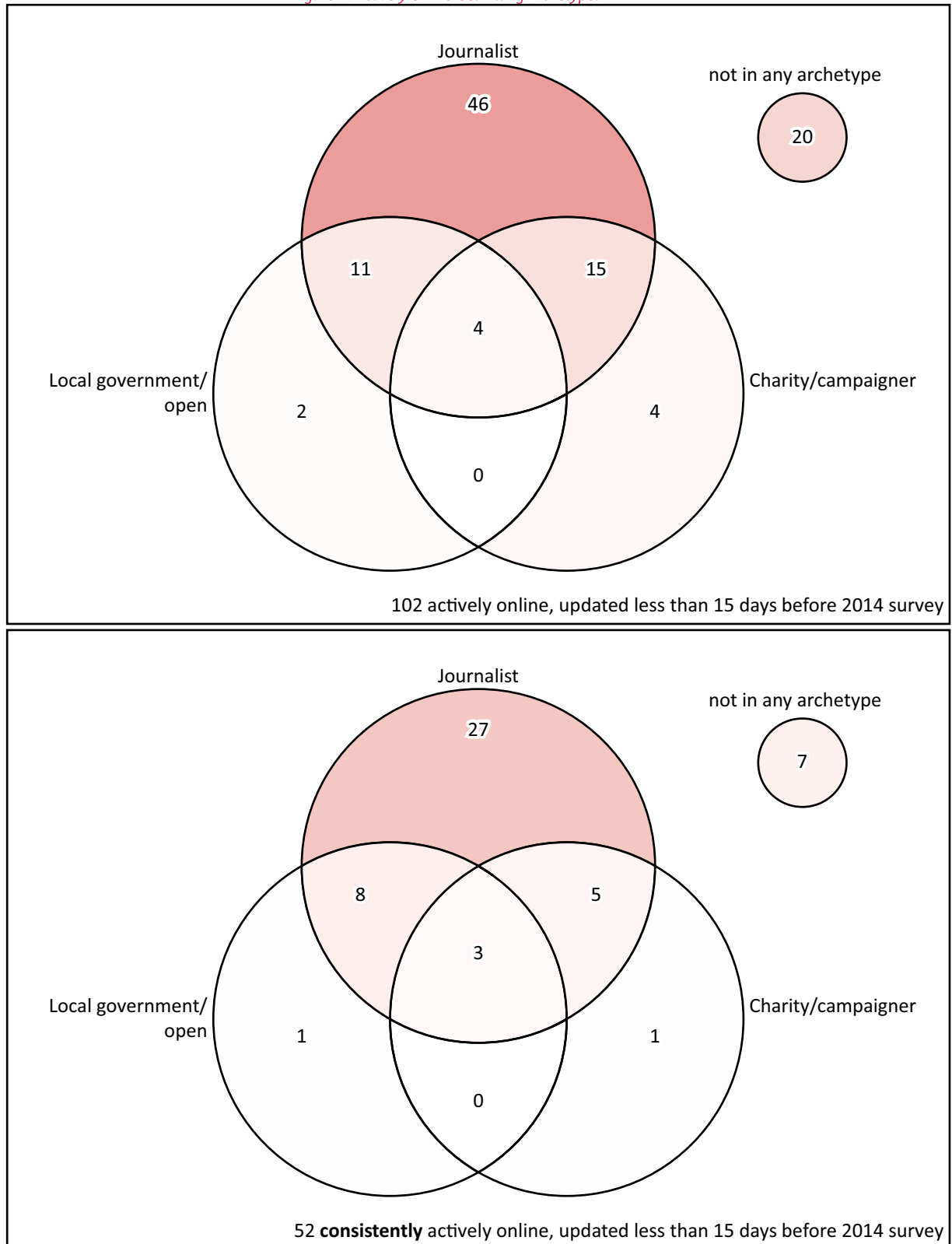
The members' names, minutes and contact mechanism criteria selected those CCs providing the basic openness that might be expected of government bodies, while the planning criterion covered the most pertinent 'local government' duty. To include all CCs that might be trying to be open and to fulfil their 'local government duty', the contact mechanism criterion was as relaxed as possible – any contact mechanism published on a CC website qualified, from a postal address or phone number to a full suite of social media channels along with email addresses for all members.

To restrict the analysis to only the CCs which were maintaining fresh content, the data was filtered to include only actively online CCs which had updated their content within 14 days of the survey date, leaving 102 CCs for investigation. Of these, 76 fitted the Journalist archetype, 23 fitted the Charity/campaigner archetype and 17 fitted the Local government/open archetype, as pictured in Figure 7.

For the 52 **consistently** actively online CCs in the reduced set, the respective figures were 43, 9 and 12, leaving 7 CAO CCs that did not fit this simple analysis. (The AO and CAO CCs in each archetype are listed in Table 7.) It should be understood that CCs fitting archetypes in 2014 and being consistently actively online does not imply that the CCs fitted archetypes in 2012.

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Figure 7: actively online CCs fitting archetypes



Clearly, majorities of CCs within the reduced AO and CAO sets fit only the Journalist archetype – that is they use their online presences to inform their citizens but not for campaigning or ‘local government’ functions. No CCs within these sets fulfil the combination of Local government/open and Charity/campaigner but not Journalist. This leads to the tentative conclusions that those CCs which focus solely on local government activities stay away from campaigning (and vice versa) and that to both campaign and act as local government has a starting point in news generation.

A further refinement of the archetypes is to consider whether the presences support online input by citizens. For example, a Journalist CC may increase its readership by hosting online discussion similar to the

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BBC News website's have-your-say feature (BBC News, 2014). A Charity/campaigner CC may attempt to build supporters or generate campaign ideas via a social media presence, while a Local government/open CC could ask its citizens' opinions on planning matters. Also, citizens may desire direct contact with relevant office-bearers such as convenors of specialist subcommittees (e.g. New Town and Broughton Community Council, 2014).

Hence the numbers of archetype-fitting AO CCs which had contact email addresses or forms, office-bearer contact details and social media presences were found. Majorities of Journalist CCs had contact forms (61 of 76) and social media presences (55), but only a minority (27) had office-bearer contact details. A similar pattern was found for the 23 Charity/campaigner CCs. For the 17 Local government/open CCs, there were majorities for all three contact formats: it is heartening that all have some form of contact mechanism and that a majority have social media presences. These CCs are theoretically able to converse with their citizens about the matters for which they are responsible. Details are given in Table 8.

Deeper content analysis of the presences – outwith this project's scope – would be needed to investigate further. For example, we have not yet investigated how CCs use their social media presences. Further, the 82 actively online CCs that fit the archetypes are only a minority of the 655 (generally less active) online presences – we have not investigated how the other online CCs use their presences. However, given the potential aims for CCs stated above, it is likely that the archetypes can be used *normatively* – to explain what CCs potentially *should* be doing – and can, to some extent, be used *descriptively* – to state what they are doing.

### 3.7 PERFORMANCES VARY SIGNIFICANTLY BETWEEN LAs

There have been status-changes in every LA. For example, North Lanarkshire now has significantly more 'exists, not online' CCs, caused by a significant reduction in online CCs. Despite this churn (which was discussed in 3.3 above), there are clear patterns in the locations of actively online (AO) and consistently actively online (CAO) CCs, as shown in Figure 8. The numbers of CCs in the 'does not exist', 'exists but not online', 'online, out of date' and 'online, up to date' statuses in each LA in 2014 are shown in Table 9, while changes since 2012 are shown in Table 10. The numbers of CCs in each LA that are actively online are shown in Table 11.

Figure 8: locations of actively online CCs

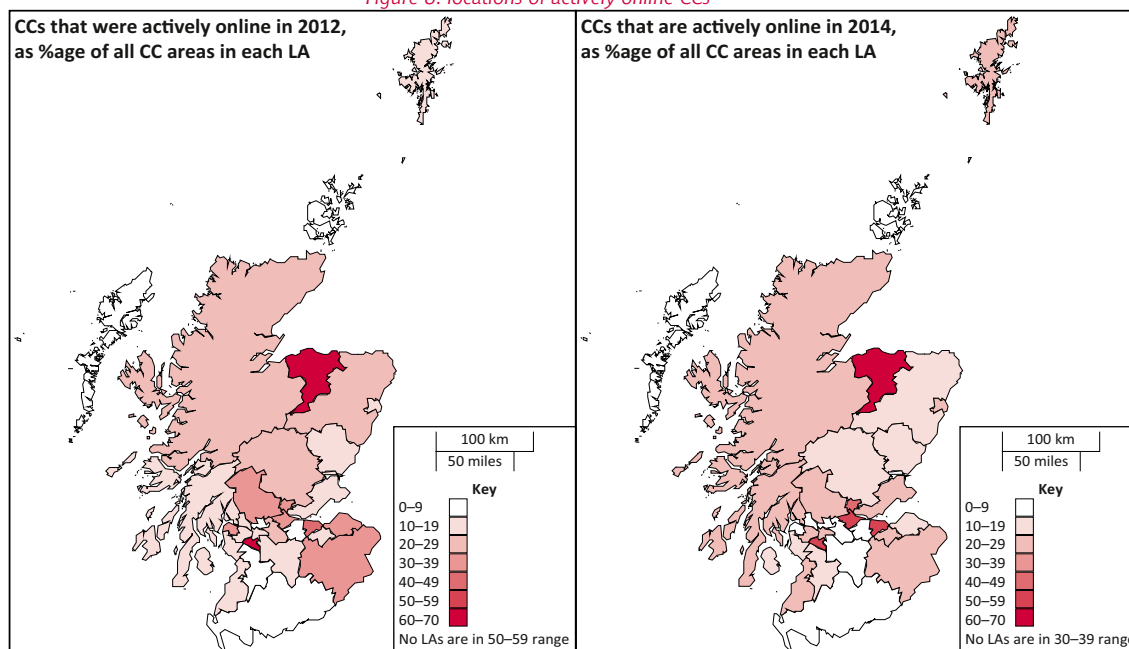
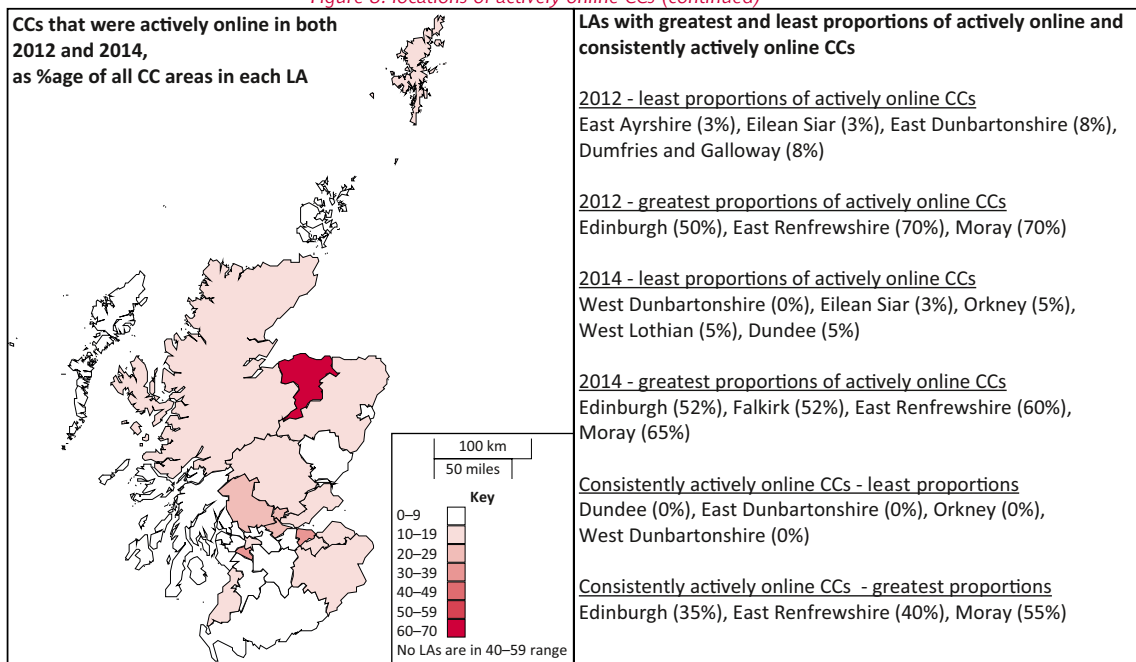




Figure 8: locations of actively online CCs (continued)



Edinburgh, East Renfrewshire and above all Moray stand out as high performers. Together they have 31 CAO CCs out of a potential total of 76, so even these LAs have much room for improvement. However, these LAs' citizens are very well served compared to Dundee, East Dunbartonshire, Orkney and West Dunbartonshire: these LAs have no CAO CCs at all.

It is also interesting that Moray, which has the most actively online CCs, has comparatively few CCs that fit the archetypes in section 3.5. Moray's 13 CC presences all have LA-hosted channels, while 8 have other channels that would be capable of hosting, for example, planning information. This can be taken as support for the theory first raised in 2012 that LA-hosting discourages CCs from publishing information other than the bare minima required by LAs.

In 14 LAs (representing 38% of Scotland's population) fewer than 10% of their CCs are consistently actively online. Only about 25 percent of Scotland's population is represented by online, up to date CCs. (Details are given in Table 12.)

Considering the churn noted in section 3.3 and the within-LA changes shown in Table 10, the actual situation in most LAs is worse than simply unchanging.

### 3.8 CC SCHEMES CAN POSITIVELY INFLUENCE USE CCs TO USE THE INTERNET

To attempt to explain the above data and the inevitable conclusion that CCs generally do not use the internet well, we reviewed guidance and support on LA websites. In summary, we found 8 LAs did not have their schemes in the Community Council sections of their websites.

CC schemes and other guidance documents were found on 24 of the 32 LA websites. (Details of these findings are given in Table 13.) All quote the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994 (and its 1973 predecessor) that the general purpose of CCs is to 'ascertain, co-ordinate and express' the opinions of the areas they represent – but not all give guidance on how to do so. Only 8 suggest that CCs could have websites and only 4 suggest that CCs could use social media. South Ayrshire's scheme appears to be the only one that implies that CCs should have websites.

14 of the 24 schemes contain the word 'open' in the sense of 'openness'. Most of these state that 'Community Councillors have a duty to be as open as possible about their decisions and actions, giving reasons for their decisions and restricting information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.' While acknowledging that the archetypes in section 3.6 may only be normative, of the 9 CCs in the Local government/Open archetype, 8 are in LAs that clearly recommend openness. Of the 211 AO CCs in such LAs, 143 name all their members, and 200 publish contact details. Hence there seems to be a correlation between LAs recommending openness and CCs actually doing so.

Restricting the dataset to those 1185 CCs in LAs which publish guidance online, there is a correlation between LAs suggesting that CCs could have online presences and CCs being actively online (55% versus 41%). A similar correlation was found between LAs suggesting that CCs could use social media and the proportion actually doing so (51% vs 33%).

In summary, LA guidance appears to have a positive effect on CCs actually using the internet.

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## 4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

At the outset of this research, the authors hoped to find improvements in CCs' internet use. However, the situation is mostly unchanged – in some areas it is slightly worse. Still under a quarter of CCs have up to date presences, and these generally do not support the statutory requirement to ascertain and disseminate community opinions. It is likely there is an increasing number of CCs who perceive that their attempts at maintaining an online presence have failed.

This section includes recommendations to address the issues raised in this report. Recommendations from the 2012 research that remain pertinent are reiterated first, followed by new recommendations stemming from this research. Those that we believe are most likely to provide immediate but lasting benefits are listed first.

Some Schadenfreude may be gained from similar experiences of CCs' southern neighbours, English Parish Councils (PCs). According to CPALC, a body concerned with supporting and training PCs, many PC websites do not host minutes, have garish design, do not name parish councillors, have broken menus and do not support mobile use or engagement with citizens (CPALC, 2013; Smith, 2014). Blame is laid on uninterested parish councillors, poorly or untrained parish clerks and lack of teamwork or knowledge-sharing between PCs and higher tiers of councils.

### 4.1 GOOD PRACTICE FINDINGS

To begin to combat CCs' overall poor online performance we bring together the hallmarks of actively online CCs. These CCs tend to publish minutes, news and local area information, along with a limited range (2-4) of additional content-types. There is evidence of more use of social media by AO CCs than by other online CCs. In part following on from this, they are also more likely to support mobile browsing, to publish planning material and have contact mechanisms. A simple recommendation springing from this is that other CCs should try to evolve to emulate these CCs.

The 45 Community Councils across 16 LAs that met these criteria in 2014 are listed in alphabetical order in the box to the right. The three Community Councils whose names are in *italic* have particularly strong presences.

Moray Council deserves an honourable mention for ensuring a consistently high level of actively online CC presences.

### 4.2 2012 RECOMMENDATIONS

All of the recommendations from our 2012 report remain pertinent. They are summarised in this section, and those recommendations that to our knowledge have been progressed are noted.

1. All CC URLs should be published on LA websites, as well as on a national portal (section 1.1) while LAs should enable and encourage CCs to maintain their own content, along with widening the potential ranges of content on CC presences they host. A national portal is being created by the Improvement Service.
2. Publicising positive role models, and mentoring by CCs that already have effective online presences, are also highly recommended. The 2012 SLWG (Scottish Government, 2012a) recommended a national interactive portal [for] support and guidance. We endorse this if it can become the nucleus of a community of practice.
3. Clearly training is needed, rather than leaving CCs to go it alone. Such training needs to be ongoing, so that new CC webmasters can fulfil their roles. Such training could be delivered by LA libraries. It would need to include not only the 'hard' skills of creating presences but also 'soft' skills such as writing for the internet and handling citizen input. Training for CCLOs, and enabling them to support their CCs' social media presences, are also needed.

#### *Top CCs for content type and sustained online presences*

- **Argyll & Bute:** Dunadd
- **Clackmannanshire:** Tullibody, Cambus and Glenochil
- **East Renfrewshire:** Barrhead
- **Edinburgh:** Juniper Green; Leith Central; Leith Links; Liberton & District; Longstone; Marchmont and Sciennes; Murrayfield; Queensferry and District; Wester Hailes
- **Eilean Siar:** *Paic*
- **Falkirk:** Bo'ness; Larbert, Stenhousemuir & Torwood
- **Fife:** Bellyeoman; *Burntisland*; Freuchie; Inverkeithing; St Monans; Townhill
- **Glasgow:** Arden, Carnwadric, Kennishead & Old Darnley; Baillieston; Blairdardie & Old Drumchapel; Castlemilk; Crosshill & Govanhill; *Dennistoun*; Yorkhill & Kelvingrove
- **Highland:** Berriedale and Dunbeath; Sinclairs Bay; Duror and Kentallen; Garve and District; Nether Lochaber; Sleat
- **Inverclyde:** Kilmacolm
- **Moray:** Elgin; Lennox
- **Perth & Kinross:** Alyth
- **Scottish Borders:** Eyemouth Town
- **South Ayrshire:** Alloway and Doonfoot
- **South Lanarkshire:** Blackmount; Lesmahagow
- **Stirling:** Cambusbarron; Dunblane; Strathfillan

4. In line with the 2012 SLWG, we recommend a national level induction pack. In the authors' personal experience, induction training provided by Edinburgh Council was beneficial to their work with CCs, and was appreciated by other Community Councillors we met, not least because it helped build relationships.
5. In line with the findings of the 2012 SLWG, we recommend that CCs are supported in using digital methods and social media. We further recommend that CCs' online presences are 2-way so that consultation of and engagement with citizens can be realised. CCs need to realise and demonstrate to themselves and to citizens the benefits of their online presences.
6. While we recommend certain content-types (see section 4.3.1 below), we do not recommend imposition of standard methods: there is already a substantial proportion of online CCs that have developed their presences that meet these content-type recommendations, along with others that could do so.
7. We recommend LA support to help CCs to develop emailing lists, and in retaining access to these.
8. Concerning planning, we recommend promotion of the SG and LA planning portals, and engineering of these portals to stream only relevant items to individual CCs, and to enable electronic submissions and feedback. In line with the 2012 SLWG, we recommend that LAs provide CCs with constructive feedback on how their representations are used and, if they are not use, the reasons for this.

## 4.3 NEW RECOMMENDATIONS

### 4.3.1 Recommendations for CCs

Firstly, CC websites should be publicised wherever relevant. We suggest that CC webmasters are more likely to continue such work if they know it has ongoing benefit. For example, publishing links to a presence's planning content would enable citizens to understand the CC's position.

Based on research on local and open government presences, CC websites should have the following content and features:

#### Content

1. Timely, up-to-date information
2. Relevant documents (e.g. minutes)
3. News
4. CC or Community Councillor blogs
5. Names of all Community Councillors
6. Contact information
7. Local area information
8. Systems to report issues
9. Options for citizen input (e.g. facilities for commenting on posts)
10. Can solicit citizen input (e.g. polls)
11. Planning information
12. Links to the CC's social media channels

#### Features

13. Easy navigation
14. Mobile version
15. Attractive, consistent design
16. Security/privacy features/policy
17. Customisation for VI users etc

(Ryan, 2013, p18)

Based on this, we recommend that CCs first spend time planning not only their presences' content – limiting themselves to sustainable content (section 3.5) – but also who will maintain them. There is evidence that CC webmasters are often untrained and generally go it alone (Ryan, 2013): we recommend that CCs develop teams to run their presences.

We strongly suggest CCs build their initial presences on Wordpress.com or similar blogging platforms: doing so will automatically fulfil requirements 4, 9, 13, 14, 15 and 16, and can help fulfil requirements 6, 8, 10, 12 and 17. Doing so will also help with continuity – we are aware that some CCs' presences are run on members' own servers. While such systems may have advantages over other platforms, we fear that when such webmasters retire, the presences will disappear with them.

Further, building websites on such platforms incurs financial costs that should be within CCs' very limited budgets (Bort, Mcalpine, & Morgan, 2012) and requires little more skill than that needed to shop online (Ryan, 2013, pp99-106).

Once the website is established, a social media presence can be developed. Tools such as Hootsuite enable organisations to find out what is being said on Twitter about local issues, and hence join such conversations. For example, if a citizen tweets about refuse not being collected, a CC could find this conversation and take up the matter with the relevant LA officials, and publicise that it is doing so. This might not only help resolve individual issues but would help improve CCs' image – which is currently very poor (Ryan, 2013, p45).

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We recommend against using Twitter alone – it is not suited to hosting documents such as minutes, and is best used for conversations. We recommend that in line with Facebook’s policy, CCs should use ‘pages’ rather than other Facebook formats. Such recommendations should be part of any social media training for CCs.

## 4.3.2 Recommendations for LA and the Scottish Government

Findings at this level reflect on policy and context, rather than decisions by individual CCs and their members. We will continue research in the latter area later in 2014.

The intention of this section is **not** to criticise CCLOs’ intentions and actions: we acknowledge their dedication to this expression of local democracy and sympathise with the frustrations of CCLOs who have to deal, for example, with CCs that refuse to use email, or are forbidden from accessing social media at work and so cannot support their CCs’ efforts in this vein. However, it is not obvious that CCLs are currently well placed to support CCs who wish to be effectively online.

The recommendations that follow from our findings are set out below:

1. As also recommended by the 2012 SLWG (section 1.1), all LAs should publish their guidance to CCs online, ideally as computer-readable content rather than scans of printed documents. We suggest that putting guidance online may also be a tacit good example for CCs.

In line with the 2012 SLWG’s recommendation that CCs engage digitally (section 1.1) and the findings in section 3.8, LA guidance should state that CCs should have online presences. While some CCs still refuse even to use email, we believe enabling CCs to use online methods well would be a better use of LA resources than printing and posting materials. From experience reported in section 3.4.1, Facebook training will include the need to use ‘pages’ instead of other Facebook formats.

2. Because some CC presences do not enable CCs to be contacted by citizens (section 3.1), firstly CCs should be encouraged to add contact email addresses to their presences. We further suggest that LAs provide CCs with general contact addresses such as [contact\\_anyCC@anyLA.gov.uk](mailto:contact_anyCC@anyLA.gov.uk), or with office-bearer email addresses such as [secretary\\_anyCC@anyLA.gov.uk](mailto:secretary_anyCC@anyLA.gov.uk) etc.

Basing CC email addresses on LAs’ own systems may well be a route to LA IT teams beginning to support CCs’ online work. As well as appearing more ‘professional’, such email addresses would promote continuity by removing the need to update contact information on CC presences, and by avoiding CC email addresses not going silent as incumbents retire. Incoming office-bearers could avail themselves of previous email conversations and existing address-books. Of course, outgoing incumbents would need to relinquish these official addresses, and their successors might need support to begin to use them.

3. CCLOs should not be simply *permitted* to use social media, but *encouraged* to do so, to promote such routes to community engagement and opinion-gathering by CCs (section 3.4.1).
4. With regard to LA-hosted presences, from the findings in section 3.4.2 we recommend that all LA websites support mobile browsers. At a stroke, this would enable up to 50 more presences to support mobile users, and would also benefit citizens beyond those who visit CC websites.
5. While we understand that there are some advantages to LAs hosting CC presences, there are issues with the current form of LA-hosted presences. From the findings in 2012 and in section 3.8, it is possible that LAs are unwittingly hindering CCs’ endeavours by limiting scope for experimentation. We recognise the value of LAs hosting minutes, Community Councillors’ names and other routine material but these are only parts of CCs’ ideal online presences.
6. From the findings in section 3.4, we suggest that CCLOs of LAs with relatively poor CC presences can learn how other LAs’ CCs achieve more.
7. As in 2012, it seems that CCs rely on individuals to create and maintain online presences (sections 3.3, 3.6 and 3.7). Further, it is just luck which determines whether any CC has a member capable of these tasks. Should he or she become unavailable, CC presences are likely to falter or even fail completely. Hence there is a real skills issue to overcome. This point was driven home to one of the authors by the secretary of one of the CAO CCs saying

‘How many people here do you think are capable [of setting up an online presence]? The chair, the vicechair, me, you, an IT-student member and I reckon that’s it. The other 20 are passive onlookers, happy to raise an issue at a meeting but generally unwilling and unable to help outside the meetings...’

(Ryan, 2013, p44)



This also points out another issue – lack of willingness to use online engagement techniques. This may be an instance of learned helplessness, which in part may be overcome by IS- or LA-provided training. Such training would cover not only the ‘hard’ tasks of setting up presences, including selection of appropriate types of content but also the ‘soft’ skills involved in publishing appropriate content, along with use of analytics so that CCs can learn which types of content most benefit their citizens. From section 3.2, this training would also cover how CCs can digitally and otherwise engage with their citizens about local planning matters.

8. It is necessary for training and support providers to consider the implications of the loss of self-efficacy evidenced by the high rate of churn demonstrated in sections 3.3 and 3.7. Mechanisms to ensure that presences are sustained will be needed.

As noted above, CCs are currently not regarded as being part of local government: this does not encourage them to fulfil citizens’ democratic needs. Because CCs are tasked with acting in some ways as local governments (section 3.6) and are part of Scotland’s democracy, we feel that recognising them as such, and evolving them into more professional bodies while retaining their hyperlocal basis would be worthwhile. However, such matters are beyond this report’s scope.

## 5 LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH, AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

This report is necessarily limited to a snapshot of CCs’ public online presences in late spring 2014. Closed Facebook groups were treated as offline, while other private digital systems used by CCs were not investigated. It only considers methods of digital engagement between CCs and citizens, not their depth or extent. Other methods to engage with citizens who cannot or do not use computers are necessary.

Understanding why around a quarter of CCs do not exist was considered outwith the scope of this research.

This report does not investigate the reasons behind individual choices and factors that shape the online presences of individual CCs. Such research has been started (Ryan, 2013) but so far has been limited to a few Edinburgh CCs, most of which had up-to-date presences. Extending this research may well help break the barriers preventing CCs from engagement with their citizens.

With the recent release of census data at CC level, it may be possible to investigate correlations between demographic data and CCs’ online performances. Visualisation of such data, analogous to currently available research into multiple deprivation factors in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2012b) may help find commonalities between poorly-performing CCs.

On a more optimistic side, research into the development, benefits and other effects of sustainable digital engagement by CCs is needed. The authors have recently secured funding to begin a pilot project in this area, and will report findings in late 2014.

Following on from CCs’ need for training in online techniques, a factor verified in conversations with some CCLOs and by the authors’ personal experience, training materials and sessions are needed. To help fulfil these needs, one of the authors is shortly to begin creating a guide to creating CC websites and a draft CC social media policy.

## 6 CLOSING THOUGHT

Despite the efforts of the recent Scottish Government SLWG, the Improvement Service, Local Authorities’ Community Council Liaison Officers and many individual Community Councillors, there has been no general improvement in CCs’ online performance. Although some may feel that the CC ‘brand’ is damaged, this research has shown some CCs can and do use the internet effectively. However, the majority of CCs need policy and resource support to avoid relying on luck to attract dedicated, energetic webmasters and other members.

Without an effective hyperlocal form of government, Scotland is left with a large democratic deficit. No matter what happens in September 2014, there is general recognition a need to revisit and renew local government in Scotland. The key question is, is it right that Scotland should be bereft of a modern internet-enabled hyperlocal democracy?

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## APPENDIX 1: METHODS

The following methods were used to assess CC presences.

### TIMELINESS

Whether the presence is **up to date** or **out of date**. Presences are classified as up-to-date if they were updated 62 or fewer days before the presence was investigated, to allow for minutes not being uploaded until they have been approved at subsequent meetings. When no update date could be determined, the presences are assumed to be out of date.

The presence's **update frequency**. Presences are classified as:

- **monthly** if minutes are added after each meeting (so that CCs who met every two or three months but updated their presences after each meeting were not counted as updating 'rarely'), or if blog, Facebook or Twitter posts were added once a month
- **rarely** if the presence is updated less often than monthly, and this is not due to the CC meeting less frequently than monthly, or if no update data could be found
- **often** if updating occurs more frequently than the 'monthly' classification.

### HOSTING AND CONTROL

How the content and/or format of the presence is **controlled**. The classifications used are:

- **community website**: where the presence is hosted on a local community website and hence is subject to space, format and content limits set by the community website operators; e.g. <http://www.crudenbay.net/cccmembers.htm>
- **Facebook**: while the textual and visual content of Facebook channels is under the CC's control, Facebook has limited formats and document-hosting facilities; e.g. <https://www.facebook.com/RoseheartyCommunityCouncil>
- **LA**: where the local authority defines the presence's format or content – such sites tend to be limited to minutes, meeting dates, CC contact details and members' names; e.g. <http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/services/people-communities/community-councils/langlees-bainsford-new-carron.aspx>
- **Own**: where the format and content are largely or completely under the CCs' control; e.g. <http://methlick.wordpress.com/methlick-community-council>
- **Twitter**: while the textual and visual content of such a presence is under the CC's control, Twitter has very limited formats and document-hosting facilities; e.g. <https://twitter.com/gilmertoninchcc>

How the presence is **hosted**:

- **CC association**: where the presence is on a website pertaining to a group of CCs; e.g. <http://www.communitycouncilsglasgow.org.uk/auchenshuggle>. The distinction between this class and the LA class may be artificial. All such presences are hosted on <http://www.communitycouncilsglasgow.org.uk> and it is assumed that this portal is closely linked to Glasgow City Council.
- **Social media only**: where the presence is
  - only on Facebook and Twitter; e.g. <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Wester-Hailes-Community-Council/142808962451621> and <https://twitter.com/WesterHailesCC>
  - only on Facebook; e.g. <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Ferryden-Craig-Community-Council/202701339755757>
  - only on Twitter; e.g. <https://twitter.com/gilmertoninchcc>
- **Template- and site-providers**: where the presence hosted by platforms such as BT's community services, community-council.org.uk, Digital Fife, Google, Moonfruit, Vistaprint, Webeden or Weebly; e.g. <http://www.community-council.org.uk/Kilmore>
- **LA**: where the local authority hosts the CC presence – this is the same set of presences as the 'LA' controlled class above
- **Blog**: where the presence is hosted by [wordpress.com](http://wordpress.com) or [Blogger](http://Blogger); e.g. <http://ekccblogger.blogspot.co.uk>, <http://leithlinksc.wordpress.com>. Many of the presences hosted by wordpress.com do not have wordpress.com in their URLs but state that they are 'powered by Wordpress' or similar.
- **Unknown**: where the host could not be determined. Many such presences appear as if they use wordpress.com themes but do not have 'wordpress' in their URLs or elsewhere.

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## CONTENT

The types of **content** on the presence, not including content only available by downloading minutes and similar. Content is classified as:

- **local area:** content describing or advertising local amenities, attractions, businesses and similar
- **minutes**
- **news:** content describing or advertising local events and newsworthy occurrences
- **planning:** content related to CCs' planning activities
- **representatives:** information on relevant LA councillors, MPs and MSPs, and/or links to web pages pertaining to the representatives
- **map:** a map of the CC's area or a direct link to one on the LA's website
- **photos and videos:** including both photos of the local area and photos of the CCllrs, but not including header photos in wordpress.com sites and similar
- **campaigns:** content about the CC's campaigns, initiatives, actions etc on behalf of its community
- **links:** links to other websites
- **consultations:** links to, or information about consultations run by the CC itself, the LA or the Scottish Government
- **other content:** any content, apart from contact details, not in the above categories. A list of the types of content found is given in Table 6.

## CONTACT DETAILS, OPENNESS AND MOBILE SUPPORT

**Contact details and openness** information. The classes used are:

- **Members' names:** if names of all members, not just one or more office-bearers, appear to be present
- **contact details for office-bearers:** addresses, phone numbers and/or email addresses
- **contact details for all members:** addresses, phone numbers and/or email addresses
- **contact form or email address.** While many presences do not include such information, those using open Facebook pages or Twitter were also assumed to be in this class.

**Mobile device support.** Each CC website URL accessed on an iPhone 4 running iOS5. The classes used are

- **None:** if the website does not appear to have a mobile version when accessed on the iPhone.
- **Alternative URL:** if accessing the website on the iPhone automatically displays a distinct mobile URL. For example, accessing <https://www.facebook.com/CarbrainHillcrestCommunityCouncil> on the iPhone automatically displays <https://m.facebook.com/CarbrainHillcrestCommunityCouncil>
- **Responsive:** if accessing the website on the iPhone automatically displays a mobile version without a distinct URL.

If a presence has 2 or more channels, the class of the most mobile-supporting part is used in this research. For example, if a presence consists of an LA hosted web-page that does not support mobile devices and a Facebook page that uses an alternative URL, the presence is classed as 'alternative URL'.

## APPENDIX 2: TABLES OF RESULTS

Table 1: planning

LA	CCs	AO CCs	AO CCs presenting planning content	% of CCs in LA
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1369</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>8</b>
Edinburgh	46	24	19	41
Argyll & Bute	56	19	8	14
Highland	156	46	21	13
Midlothian	16	4	2	13
Fife	105	25	13	12
Aberdeen	30	8	3	10
East Renfrewshire	10	6	1	10
Aberdeenshire	70	13	6	9
Falkirk	23	12	2	9
Glasgow	101	21	9	9
Inverclyde	11	1	1	9
Stirling	43	12	4	9
East Dunbartonshire	13	1	1	8
North Ayrshire	17	2	1	6
East Lothian	20	3	1	5
South Lanarkshire	58	5	3	5
West Lothian	40	2	2	5
Angus	25	5	1	4
North Lanarkshire	80	6	3	4
Perth & Kinross	52	8	2	4
Renfrewshire	26	7	1	4
Scottish Borders	67	16	3	4
Eilean Siar	30	1	1	3
South Ayrshire	29	8	1	3
Dumfries & Galloway	107	10	2	2
Clackmannanshire	9	4	-	-
Dundee	19	1	-	-
East Ayrshire	35	4	-	-
Moray	20	13	-	-
Orkney	20	1	-	-
Shetland	18	4	-	-
West Dunbartonshire	17	-	-	-

Table 2: channels and control of presences

	channels	All presences	AO presences	All presences with LA-hosted channels	AO presences with LA-hosted channels
Single-channel presences	Website only	493	181	64	23
	Facebook only	48	29	-	-
	Twitter only	5	4	-	-
Multi-channel presences	Facebook + Twitter	3	3	-	-
	Website + Facebook	57	41	13	6
	Website + Twitter	27	17	3	0
	Website + Facebook + Twitter	22	17	4	2
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>655</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>31</b>

Table 3: content and currency

Content-type	actively online presences	other presences
<b>Totals</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>363</b>
Local area	241	241
minutes	249	254
news	199	184
all big 3 (Local area, minutes, news)	<b>148 (51%)</b>	<b>107 (29%)</b>
planning	111	65
representatives	70	78
map	77	61

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photos & videos	86	104
campaigns	51	42
links	91	92
consultations	10	11
CC members' names	199	228
Office-bearer contact details	124	124
All members' contact details	65	65
Contact form or email address	241	263
Other content	83	71

Table 4: CC-centric and CC-peripheral content-types

Classification <sup>1</sup>	content-type	justification
CC-centric	Local area information	Both can be gathered by members: they automatically live in their CC areas
	News	
	Minutes	Produced by the CCs themselves
	All big 3 (Local area, minutes, news)	As above
	Planning	CCs arguably have a duty to inform and consult their citizens about local planning matters.
	Photos and videos	Both can be commissioned or produced by CCs. In the course of this research, several examples extolling tourist attractions in CC areas were observed.
	Campaigns	Such material would be produced by the CCs themselves
	Contact details, CC members' names	CCs are responsible for creating their own contact mechanisms, elect their own office bearers and know soonest if a member has been co-opted or has resigned.
CC-peripheral	Representatives	Available on LA, SG and UK government presences
	Maps	Available on most LA websites
	Links	By definition these point to information available elsewhere. Also, links may easily become broken.
	Consultations	Available on LA and SG websites
	Other content	Often concerned with content available elsewhere

<sup>1</sup> Such classifications are not clear-cut. For example, links to LA planning portals could be considered to be CC-centric if they filter down to planning applications relevant to individual CCs.

Table 5: CC-centric and CC-peripheral data

Year	AO CCs		Other online CCs	
	CC-centric	CC-peripheral <sup>1</sup>	CC-centric	CC-peripheral <sup>1</sup>
2012	99%	15%	89%	21%
2014	100%	63%	92%	49%

<sup>1</sup> Because 'other' content was not further classified, and photos and videos were ignored in 2012, all 'other' content in 2012 is assumed to be CC-peripheral.

Table 6: other content types

Accessibility features	Activities for children and adults information	Activities list
Beach safety information	Bins information	Blog(s)
Business directory/information	Calendar	Chair's report
Comments by citizens	Common good fund information	Community diary
Community groups information	Community survey	Community woodlands information
Conservation area information	CC Constitution	Correspondence
Crime reports	Data protection registration	Discussion forum
Employment adverts and opportunities	Environmental information/matters/work by CCs	Events information
FAQs	Financial assistance information	Fire reports
Flooding roles information	Forum	Funds/grants sources information
Green spaces information	Health walks information	Highland council's training (link)
HMOs information	Intra-CC member email addresses	Link to Fix my street
Links to local newsletters	Links to other communities	Links to village committees
List of positive results	Local action plan	Local CC association link
Local gardening information	Local groups information	Local history
Local schools information	Local webcam feeds	Mailing list
Message board	Multi-use games arena	Newsletters
Noticeboard	Objectives	Petitions
Polls	Press releases	Privacy statement
Private area (for CC members)	Property for sale/rent	Public and private road advice
Recycling information	Street repairs information	Resources for CC members (documents provided by LA)
School holidays information	Site map	Site search

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Suggestion box	Support for pensioners information	Tag cloud
Tourist information	Transport, traffic and amenities information	Twinning information
Useful phone numbers	Utility companies information	Videos of local history
Vision statement	Volunteering opportunities	Water towers
Webmail for CC members	Website sponsors information	Welfare reform act information
Windfarm information, including funding availability	Youth activities information	Youth art competition to decorate website

Table 7: CCs that fit hypothesised archetypes

<b>Journalist only</b>	
Aberdeen: .....	Ashley and Broomhill; City Centre
Angus: .....	Ferryden & Craig
Argyll & Bute: .....	<b>Dunadd</b>
Clackmannanshire: .....	Dollar; <b>Tullibody, Cambus and Glenochil</b>
East Renfrewshire: .....	<b>Barrhead</b>
Edinburgh: .....	Leith Harbour and Newhaven; <b>Longstone; Marchmont and Sciennes; Murrayfield; Wester Hailes</b>
Falkirk: .....	<b>Bo'ness</b> ; Maddiston
Fife: .....	Cowdenbeath; <b>Freuchie; Inverkeithing</b> ; Royal Burgh of Cupar & District; Wellwood
Glasgow: .....	<b>Arden, Carnwadric, Kennishead &amp; Old Darnley; Baillieston; Blairdardie &amp; Old Drumchapel; Castlemilk;</b> Mount Florida; Partick; Swinton; Woodside; <b>Yorkhill &amp; Kelvingrove</b>
Highland: .....	<b>Berriedale and Dunbeath; Sinclairs Bay; Duror and Kentallen</b> ; Ferintosh; <b>Garve and District; Nether Lochaber</b>
Moray: .....	<b>Lennox</b> ; Lossiemouth
North Lanarkshire: .....	The Village
Perth & Kinross: .....	<b>Alyth</b>
Renfrewshire: .....	Erskine
Scottish Borders: .....	<b>Eyemouth Town</b>
South Ayrshire: .....	<b>Alloway and Doonfoot</b> ; Forehill, Holmston and Masonhill
South Lanarkshire: .....	<b>Blackmount</b>
Stirling: .....	Balfron; <b>Cambusbarron; Strathfillan</b>
<b>Charity/campaigner only</b>	
Angus: .....	Kirriemuir
Glasgow: .....	Whiteinch
Highland: .....	Crown
Moray: .....	<b>Elgin</b>
<b>Local government/open only</b>	
Edinburgh: .....	<b>Liberton and District</b> , Ratho and District
<b>Journalist + Charity/campaigner</b>	
Dumfries & Galloway: .....	Borgue
East Ayrshire: .....	Southcraigs-Dean
Edinburgh: .....	<b>Leith Links</b> ; Stenhouse, Saughton Mains & Whitson
Fife: .....	<b>Belyeoman</b> ; East Wemyss and McDuff; Markinch; <b>St Monans</b>
Glasgow: .....	<b>Crosshill &amp; Govanhill</b> ; Shawlands & Strathbungo
Highland: .....	Lochardil; Muirtown
North Lanarkshire: .....	Cleland
Stirling: .....	Bridge of Allan; <b>Dunblane</b>
<b>Journalist + Local government/open</b>	
Argyll & Bute: .....	Ardchattan
Edinburgh: .....	Granton & District; <b>Juniper Green; Leith Central; Queensferry and District</b>
Falkirk: .....	<b>Larbert, Stenhousemuir &amp; Torwood</b>
Fife: .....	<b>Townhill</b>
Highland: .....	Ballachulish; <b>Sleat</b>
Inverclyde: .....	<b>Kilmacolm</b>
South Lanarkshire: .....	<b>Lesmahagow</b>
<b>Journalist + Charity/campaigner + Local Government</b>	
Eilean Siar: .....	<b>Paic</b>
Fife: .....	<b>Burntisland</b>
Glasgow: .....	<b>Dennistoun</b>
Highland: .....	Melvich

Consistently actively online CCs are in bold type.

Table 8: actively online CCs that fit archetypes and have contact mechanisms

Archetype	Actively online CCs			Consistently actively online CCs		
	Contact form or email address	Officer-bearer contact details	Social media presence	Contact form or email address	Officer-bearer contact details	Social media presence
<b>Journalist only</b>	37	15	31	21	12	17
<b>Charity/campaigner only</b>	4	2	3	1	1	1
<b>Local government/open only</b>	2	1	1	1	-	-
<b>Journalist + Charity/campaigner</b>	11	2	12	4	2	2
<b>Journalist + Local government/open</b>	11	8	8	8	5	6
<b>Charity/campaigner + Local government/open</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Journalist + Charity/campaigner + Local Government</b>	2	2	4	2	1	3

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Table 9: 2014 statuses

LA	Does not exist	Exists, not online	Online, out of date	Online, up to date	Total CCs
Aberdeen	6	10	6	8	30
Aberdeenshire	2	27	26	15	70
Angus	1	7	12	5	25
Argyll & Bute	2	18	16	20	56
Clackmannanshire	0	0	4	5	9
Dumfries & Galloway	17	59	18	13	107
Dundee	11	3	3	2	19
East Ayrshire	5	26	0	4	35
East Dunbartonshire	1	6	4	2	13
East Lothian	0	10	6	4	20
East Renfrewshire	0	0	4	6	10
Edinburgh	3	6	13	24	46
Eilean Siar	5	21	3	1	30
Falkirk	6	0	5	12	23
Fife	21	40	19	25	105
Glasgow	23	34	21	23	101
Highland	3	66	40	47	156
Inverclyde	2	0	7	2	11
Midlothian	0	6	6	4	16
Moray	5	0	2	13	20
North Ayrshire	6	7	2	2	17
North Lanarkshire	43	25	6	6	80
Orkney	0	0	19	1	20
Perth & Kinross	6	18	19	9	52
Renfrewshire	4	9	6	7	26
Scottish Borders	0	24	27	16	67
Shetland	0	0	14	4	18
South Ayrshire	3	10	8	8	29
South Lanarkshire	24	20	9	5	58
Stirling	2	20	9	12	43
West Dunbartonshire	6	5	6	0	17
West Lothian	4	26	8	2	40
<b>Totals</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>503</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>1369</b>
<b>% of all potential CCs</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 10: changes since 2012

LA	does not exist	exists, not online	online, out of date	online, up to date	Change in number of CCs
Aberdeen	1	3	-3	-1	-
Aberdeenshire	-11	8	6	-3	-3
Angus	1	-5	4	-	-
Argyll & Bute	-	3	-4	1	-
Clackmannanshire	-	-3	1	2	-
Dumfries & Galloway	-	-13	9	4	-
Dundee	-	3	-2	-1	-
East Ayrshire	-	-	-3	3	-
East Dunbartonshire	1	-2	-	1	-
East Lothian	-1	1	4	-4	-
East Renfrewshire	-	-	1	-1	-
Edinburgh	-1	6	-5	-	-
Eilean Siar	1	-1	-	-	-
Falkirk	-	-	-4	4	5
Fife	-2	-	-2	4	-
Glasgow	-	9	-15	6	-
Highland	-	-8	-2	1-	-1
Inverclyde	-	-	2	-2	-
Midlothian	-	-1	-1	2	-
Moray	-	-	1	-1	-
North Ayrshire	1	3	-4	-	-
North Lanarkshire	-	19	-8	-11	-1
Orkney	-	-	1	-1	-
Perth & Kinross	1	3	1	-5	-



# Community Councils online

LA	does not exist	exists, not online	online, out of date	online, up to date	Change in number of CCs
Renfrewshire	-	-3	-	3	-
Scottish Borders	-3	-	9	-6	-
Shetland	-	-13	12	1	-
South Ayrshire	1	-5	-	4	-
South Lanarkshire	-1	3	-	-2	-
Stirling	2	1	-	-3	-
West Dunbartonshire	-1	1	3	-3	-
West Lothian	-	4	-2	-2	-
<b>Totals</b>	<b>-11</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>-</b>

Table 11: actively online CCs

LA	%AO in 2012	%AO in 2014	% CAO
<b>All CCs</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>12%</b>
Moray	70%	65%	55%
East Renfrewshire	70%	60%	40%
Edinburgh	50%	52%	35%
Falkirk	30%	52%	26%
Clackmannanshire	33%	44%	22%
Stirling	33%	28%	21%
East Lothian	40%	15%	15%
Scottish Borders	31%	24%	15%
Highland	23%	29%	13%
Midlothian	13%	25%	13%
Perth & Kinross	27%	15%	13%
Glasgow	15%	21%	12%
Aberdeenshire	23%	19%	11%
Fife	18%	24%	11%
Shetland	17%	22%	11%
Aberdeen	17%	27%	10%
Argyll & Bute	17%	27%	10%
South Ayrshire	14%	28%	10%
Inverclyde	36%	9%	9%
Renfrewshire	15%	27%	8%
North Ayrshire	12%	12%	6%
Dumfries & Galloway	8%	9%	5%
South Lanarkshire	10%	9%	5%
Angus	16%	20%	4%
North Lanarkshire	21%	8%	4%
East Ayrshire	3%	11%	3%
Eilean Siar	3%	3%	3%
West Lothian	10%	5%	3%
Dundee	11%	5%	0%
East Dunbartonshire	8%	8%	0%
Orkney	10%	5%	0%
West Dunbartonshire	18%	0%	0%

Table 12: representation by online, up to date CCs

LA	population	% online up to date	pop'n represented by online, up to date CCs
<b>Totals</b>	<b>5,327,700</b>		<b>1,305,834</b>
Edinburgh	487,500	52%	254,348
Glasgow	596,550	23%	135,848
Fife	366,910	24%	87,360
Falkirk	157,140	52%	81,986
Highland	232,950	30%	70,184
Moray	94,350	65%	61,328
Aberdeen	227,130	27%	60,568
Aberdeenshire	257,740	21%	55,230
East Renfrewshire	91,500	60%	54,900
Renfrewshire	173,900	27%	46,819
Argyll & Bute	88,050	36%	31,446
South Ayrshire	112,850	28%	31,131
Clackmannanshire	51,280	56%	28,489

# Community Councils online

<i>LA</i>	<i>population</i>	<i>% online up to date</i>	<i>pop'n represented by online, up to date CCs</i>
Scottish Borders	113,870	24%	27,193
South Lanarkshire	314,850	9%	27,142
Perth & Kinross	147,750	17%	25,572
Stirling	91,260	28%	25,468
North Lanarkshire	337,730	8%	25,330
Angus	116,240	20%	23,248
Midlothian	84,700	25%	21,175
East Lothian	101,360	20%	20,272
Dumfries & Galloway	150,270	12%	18,257
East Dunbartonshire	105,860	15%	16,286
North Ayrshire	136,920	12%	16,108
Dundee	148,170	11%	15,597
Inverclyde	80,310	18%	14,602
East Ayrshire	122,440	11%	13,993
West Lothian	176,140	5%	8,807
Shetland	23,200	22%	5,156
Orkney	21,570	5%	1,079
Eilean Siar	27,400	3%	913
West Dunbartonshire	89,810	0%	0

Table 13: CC scheme data

<i>mentions 'website'</i>	<i>states CCs' purpose is to gather community opinions</i>	<i>suggests possibility of CC websites</i>	<i>Suggests possibility of CCs using social media</i>	<i>mentions 'open' and/or 'transparent' in the sense of this report</i>
Aberdeen	YES	YES	YES	YES
Aberdeenshire	YES	-	-	YES
Angus	YES	-	-	-
Argyll & Bute	YES	-	-	-
Clackmannanshire	YES	-	-	-
Dumfries & Galloway	YES	-	-	-
Dundee	Scheme not found			
East Ayrshire	YES	-	-	-
East Dunbartonshire	Scheme not found			
East Lothian	Scheme not found			
East Renfrewshire	YES	YES	YES	YES
Edinburgh	YES	YES	YES	YES
Eilean Siar	Scheme not found			
Falkirk	YES	YES	-	YES
Fife	YES	-	-	YES
Glasgow	YES	YES	YES	YES
Highland	YES	YES	-	YES
Inverclyde	Scheme not found			
Midlothian	Scheme not found			
Moray	YES	-	-	YES
North Ayrshire	YES	YES	-	-
North Lanarkshire	YES	-	-	-
Orkney	YES	-	-	-
Perth & Kinross	YES	-	-	YES
Renfrewshire	YES	YES	-	YES
Scottish Borders	YES	-	-	YES
Shetland	Scheme not found			
South Ayrshire	YES	YES	-	-
South Lanarkshire	Scheme not found			
Stirling	YES	-	-	YES
West Dunbartonshire	YES	-	-	YES
West Lothian	YES	-	-	-
<b>Totals</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>14</b>