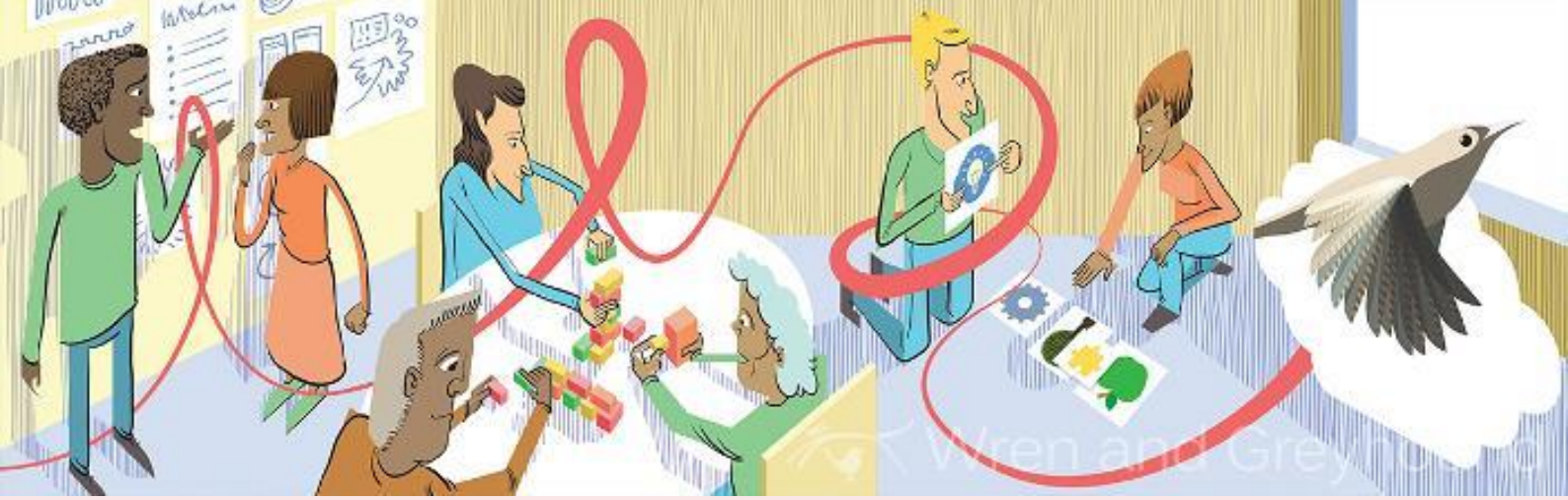




Unplugged



Summary

The 'Unplugged' residential brought together 16 inspiring Third Sector leaders, all of whom have a connection with Graeme Reekie and/or Wren and Greyhound.

Taking place over one and a half days, it gave leaders a rare opportunity to take a step back from their day to day work, creating time and space for insight and inspiration. The fabulous venue of Ardoch by Loch Lomond was the perfect setting to 'unplug' and recharge.

Taking part in the event were:

Anne Marie Monaghan, Community Brokerage Network; Anne Marie Quigg, Scottish Recovery Consortium; Bridie Ashrowan, Columba 1400; Carol Downie, Gannochy Trust; Chrissie Ruckley, Creative Scotland; Claire Stevens, Voluntary Health Scotland; Debbie Bayne, Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living; Dee Fraser, Coalition of Care Providers Scotland; Don Williamson, Shared Care Scotland; Ellie Sandercock, Carr Gomm; Flora Henderson, Thistle Foundation; Frances Bain, Paths for All; Keith Wimbles, Voluntary Action Fund; Lori Conway, Wellbeing 1st; Matt Fountain, Freedom Bakery; Michele Mason, Stafford Centre. Plus - Wren and Greyhound!

We made and strengthened lots of connections, as our social network map shows:



Overleaf - our mascot 'Sparky' recovers after participants got their hands on the gifts he'd been hiding.

Sharing ideas and learning from our themed sessions

Everyone brought something to share at the weekend and something they were seeking. We used these ideas to create four themed workshops and discussions.

One workshop was creatively facilitated using 'human sculpture' to explore challenges, so few words were used (see photo below).



Other activities and gifts that people shared included an early morning dip in Loch Lomond; a two-mile health walk and a longer ramble; acupuncture and massage taster sessions; and an evening around the bonfire. (Less healthy options were also available!)

The notes from the other sessions are shared below and overleaf.

Session 1: Getting the Oomph back

Challenges:

- Understanding personal impact
- Looking after ourselves
- Re-finding our strength and energy
- What to do when decisions are out of our control?
- Finding work/life balance
- How much of our work and energy is enough?
- How much information is enough?

What are *your* strengths, gifts, skills, priorities?

If you work in an asset-based way, would you build on these? Or seek perfection by filling gaps and addressing weaknesses?!

Would it help to view your busyness as an 'over-expressed strength' rather than a weakness?

What proportion of your time is spent on development?

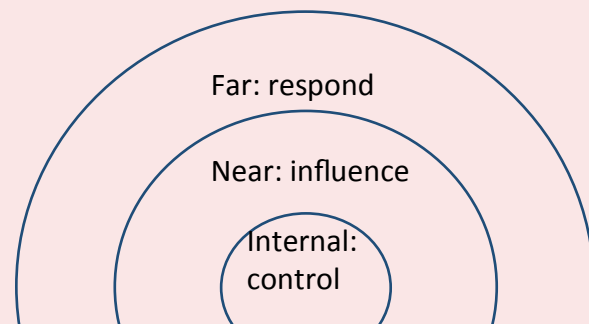
Google allows 20% of staff time.

3M encourages 15%.

A couple of our participants take ½ a day a week for reading and personal development. This is how they learn best.

Has busyness followed you around, from job to job?

- If so, what (i.e. who!) is the common factor...?
- What can you let go of?
- Can you work with others who can do the things you do less well?



Spheres of control and internal/external environments:

Are you trying to control things beyond your sphere of influence?

Is it best to change what's around you, or what's within you?

'If I can't change the people around me – I change the people around me'.

Session 2: Embracing the Chaos

Challenges:

- Mastering the 'ball of string'
- Strategies for focusing and directing effort
- Tension between seeing the big picture - and seeing detail/ maintaining quality
- Uncertainty feels like risk

Chaordic – order in chaos. Embracing chaos rather than trying to control it.

Chaos can feel unsettling, but can be a huge source of creativity. Complex adaptive systems (like organisations and ecosystems):

- Are at risk when in equilibrium
- Can self-organise and evolve.

You can't direct a living system, only disturb it!

See Richard Pascale: [Surfing the Edge of Chaos](#)

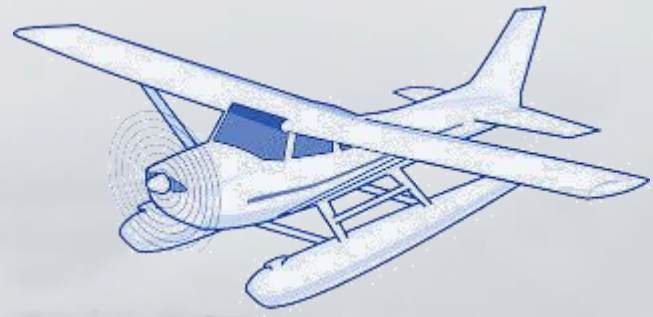
The relationship between strategy and operations

- Strategies set out what to say no to!
- Set the vision and get better at communicating it.
- Be clear on your message - What is distinctive about us?
- What networks & conduits do you have for communication? Board?
- Look for the untapped potential.
- Set out scenarios for what you could do with 25% less money, then with 50% less. What could you do with 25% more?
- If you're not sure, why seek more funding?

The Sharpie/Pencil Rule of Organisational Culture! (shared by Dee)

Red rules (sharpie rules!) are those that can't be broken and are usually there for the safety of the person. They are often based on legislative or ethical requirements of the field you practice in. They are visible, part of the 'cultural iceberg' above sea level.

Blue rules (pencil rules!) are those that are related to the custom and practice of the organisation. They might be helpful, unhelpful or neutral but what they have in common is they are generally not written down - they are just the way we do things round here. The larger part of the cultural iceberg - usually with lots of hidden depths!



Distance, direction and vision:

Rise above issues - get in the helicopter (or seaplane!). See things from a distance, in perspective.

Look back – see the progress that has already been made. Check the direction you are going in.

Sometimes it feels like you're going in circles, and seemingly resolved issues return. Have you gone in a circle, or a spiral? You might just be seeing the same thing from a new vantage point.

'Sometimes it is easier to seek forgiveness than to ask permission!'

'The best way to predict the future is to design it.'

Buckminster Fuller, quoted by Dee

Session 3: Sustainability and ecosystems

What do metaphors about the word 'sustainability' reveal - or hide?

- Landscape, bio-diversity, adaptation and evolution, competition, survival.
- Cycles and change - growth, decay, renewal.
- Dynamic, fluid, natural environments, never a steady state. Stasis = atrophy.
- Are organisations like **jungles...**
- **..or gardens?** Do they want control, order, boundaries? How much do you let the jungle in? What are the annuals, perennials?
- There's a risk that 'sustainability' means keeping things going...
- ...by definition, projects end.

If we had all the money we needed:

Would we still be talking about sustainability?

Would we fundamentally change?

Would we have more - or less - focus on quality? Would we cooperate more - or less? Would learning matter more - or less? Would we be more - or less - afraid of 'failure'?

Fundamentally: Why do we exist? What would be different if we stopped?

What do the eco-systems of the people you work with look like?

Do people want independence - or interdependence?

Are 'natural supports' better or more sustainable than professional inputs'?

When recruiting staff, why not give applicants 30 mins with your questions before the interview starts? This helps recruit people who fit your environment.



Sustainability is a journey, not a destination

'Transformation models' apply to organisms and organisations. Sustainability means finding our relationship to the environment around us - what are our inputs and where do we get them? Are our processes working? What happens to our outputs?

If you want to explore organisational metaphors and what they mean for sustainability, invite Graeme for coffee and/or read [Images of Organization](#) by Gareth Morgan.

Session 4: Relationships

What do we need relationships for? Why are we in this particular one? What do we want from it? What does the other person want from it? When did I last check? Do I want a transaction or a relationship? Do they? What value do we add for each other?

'Empathy is the starting point for creating a community and taking action. It's the impetus for creating change.' Max Carver, quoted by Anne-Marie

'If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go further, go together.'
African proverb from Keith

'Getting anything off the ground is going to require a little bit of risk. That risk starts with sharing the idea.' Anne-Marie



I've been lucky to attend various inspiring and energising events over the years. But W&G Unplugged was in a league of its own! Wonderful people, stunning setting, oodles of inspiration and knowledge. And, oh, the food... Thank you thank you thank you.

I feel energised and buzzing with new thoughts/refreshed thoughts and very much look forward to keeping in touch with you all- professionally and personally! What an amazing group of people; not least our thoughtful and original hosts. Thank you!!

I feel very nurtured by the experience. Thank you seems too humble a thing to say, but it was genuinely lovely. Cultural change in action!

Thank you for including me in what was a really inspirational weekend in a fantastic setting with lots of wonderful people.

Thank you all so much for the weekend. I will be processing it and drawing on it for a long time to come. It's ages since I spent time that was so rich, so engaging and so inspiring in so many ways. Thank you Graeme and Jenny for being incredibly generous, creative and generally wonderful! I suspect in years' time we'll still be saying 'that started at Ardoch'

I really enjoyed meeting everyone. A really extraordinary group of folk...really smart. I would definitely come again. I learnt a whole lot about the 'third sector' and the kind of culture that exists and ethos, and about some of the approaches and out of the box thinking. Thanks so much for thinking of doing this and being open to what it could be.

Many thanks for the fantastic weekend at Ardoch! Fabulous setting, a great balanced design and a 'well curated' bunch of very interesting people. Facilitation was low key and excellent and my conventional group-related panic evaporated! Thank you again for the kind gift of the time away to think and focus.

Thank you all so much for the weekend (the company, the dynamism, the food!). I came back to work on Monday to a number of issues and I truly believe if it hadn't been for the weekend, helping me re-focus and get my oomph back, I might just have had to lie down in a darkened room!

I had a really good time and thought it was a very positive experience. It seems to me that there is never enough time, opportunity or indeed a place where folks like us can converse openly and honestly about the challenges we face in our work. We have to look after ourselves before we can keep offering our support to others. Thanks everyone for the contributions, formal and informal, to the sessions and for making it all feel safe.

What can I say. It was an absolute pleasure meeting everyone this weekend. Thank you all, and a special thanks to Graeme & Jenny for the opportunity to meet amazing people.

