



Anstruther Roadshow Report

The Scottish Women's Convention (SWC) believes that cuts to local public services as well as changes to welfare benefit and tax credit systems are having a profound impact on women.

Women need to become more involved in discussions around the justice system and the referendum on the future of Scotland.

Our 2012 Roadshow programme gives women the opportunity to discuss these topics in more detail providing an insight into how these issues are having an effect on them, their families and communities.

Agnes Tolmie
Chair SWC

The SWC arranged a consultation event at the Wester Hall in Anstruther on Tuesday 29th May 2012. A cross section of women from the surrounding areas attended. Women unable to attend provided feedback through written contributions. The purpose of this event was to discuss issues which are relevant in Scotland at the moment, including the impact of public sector cuts and welfare reform, women and the justice system and the referendum on Scotland's future.

Recommendations will be given to the Scottish Government, as well as local politicians, on behalf of the women.

In order to obtain the relevant information for this report, the following procedures were used:

- **Flyers advertising the event were distributed throughout the village and surrounding areas.**
- **The SWC produced a set of questions which would create discussion around the issues.**
- **Discussions were facilitated by SWC staff and volunteers at the event.**
- **Notes taken throughout the process and quotes obtained from women attending form the basis of this report.**
- **Event evaluation forms completed by participants.**

Over the past 12 months, Scotland has seen cuts to local public services as well as changes to welfare benefit and tax credit systems. In what way are these having an impact on you/your family?

Employment

There are a lack of employment opportunities for women in Anstruther.

“Jobs are really hard to come by round here. You're lucky if you can get even a job at 16 hours a week.”

Fife Council is the largest employer however it can be difficult to obtain employment with the organisation unless a family member or friend works there. A distinct lack of childcare in the area also contributes to difficulties in women finding and remaining in work.

“Women have such a wealth of potential that could be used to make Scotland not only a nation wealthy in financial terms, but more importantly quality of life.”

Transport

Buses are the only form of public transport in and around Anstruther and are well used. Leven is the nearest large town which is commuted to for work, shopping etc. It costs £7.20 return from Anstruther to Leven. There is only an hourly bus service from the town. Routes and timetables are subject to change during school holidays and in the evenings. All of this reliance on one service makes it very difficult for women who need public transport to access employment and education in other areas of Fife. Young people who wish to travel to nearby towns in the evenings for extra-curricular activities and to socialise are also restricted due to poor timetabling.

Public Services

Public libraries are an important community service in this small fishing village. Opening hours have recently been cut with the service only open for 3 and a half days per week. People who rely on the services provided are feeling the impact. Libraries not only provide a book lending service but also internet access, club activities and community interaction.

There is no **Registrar** in Anstruther and anyone who wishes to register a birth, marriage or death has to travel to Cupar - which for those without a car means taking two buses - or St Andrews. The Registrar in St Andrews is only open a few mornings a week. Registering a death, particularly for elderly people, means travelling some distance at what is already a difficult time.

There is a great deal of concern surrounding the closure of **public toilets** in the area.

“It is an essential facility. People need toilets.”

The Council has considered closing many facilities and intends to rely on ‘comfort stops’ in shops, cafes, pubs, museums etc. This will depend on the goodwill of the proprietors of these premises. There are also possible implications for tourism, which is relied upon along the Fife coast. Beaches must have a public toilet in order to be considered for and to win awards. A lack of awareness as to where the nearest facilities are will also have an impact on women with particular sanitary needs, pregnant women and those who require baby changing facilities.

Health

Skeith Health Centre has recently opened on the outskirts of Anstruther. As well as serving the local community, people from neighbouring towns and villages use the facility. For those who rely on public transport, attending appointments can be time consuming, as there is only one bus an hour from Crail to Anstruther. Obtaining a GP appointment can be difficult, with patients often having to wait up to three weeks to see a doctor.

Welfare Reform

The changes brought about by the UK Coalition Government’s Welfare Reform measures will have an impact throughout Fife. Sudden cuts to benefits will be detrimental to those who rely on the money they receive from the Government. Those who work or have worked processing benefit claims are concerned about the implications of the changes.

“So many people will have to deal with benefits being reduced or stopped altogether. This will have an impact on their mental health, as well as the workload and stress levels of those who work with them.”

Women are in contact with the justice system in Scotland on many levels. What services are available to support women in your community?

Citizen’s Advice Scotland is seen as the most obvious source of advice and assistance with regards to women accessing justice services. Violence Against Women services such as Women’s Aid and Rape Crisis are also available in Fife.

“Citizens Advice is available to help within a bus ride and by appointment.”

The Women’s Mentoring Project run by the Fife and Forth Valley Community Justice Authority is a positive scheme in the area. The project supports women offenders who are currently in or returning to the community. It also works with those subject to community service orders.

There has been discussion recently regarding a referendum on the future of Scotland. Do you have enough information to make an informed decision and use your vote on this important issue?

There is general awareness of the referendum through coverage in newspapers and on television. It is not clear, however, what the implications would be if Scotland were to become an independent country or be given more tax-raising powers by Westminster.

“The public in general require more education on what the referendum actually represents.”

What can be done to make your area a more attractive place to live, shop and work?

- More public transport at an affordable price.
- Regular bus timetables and better connections or more direct bus routes.
- Ensuring that new housing is built near schools, shops, transport routes etc.
- More job opportunities in and around Anstruther.
- Repair pavements and potholes in roads.

Conclusions

Following on from the discussions, women asked the SWC to submit recommendations to the Scottish Government, relevant Ministers and Representatives at all Government levels. Copies will also be distributed to Non-Governmental Organisations.



The Scottish Women's Convention (SWC) is funded to engage with women throughout Scotland in order that their views might influence public policy.

This is achieved in a number of different ways - through roadshow, round table, conference and celebratory events. Following each event a report is compiled and issued to women who attend and relevant policy and decision makers.

The SWC uses the views of women to respond to Scottish and UK Government consultation papers.

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