

## Swedish Rural Parliament: 15-18<sup>th</sup> May

**Purpose:** This is intended as a short report for Directors on the Swedish Rural Parliament logistics and processes. There is a selection of photographs on Facebook with commentary which may also be useful. A shorter report will be written for the website and newsletter with integrated images.

We arrived in Gavle (pronounced Yehvla) in time for a quick dinner and bed before an early start in the morning.

### DAY 1

#### Transport

A bus picked us and other guests up from our accommodation complete with a friendly local guide. We had a brief intro to the local area as we passed sites of interest during the 15 minute drive to the venue. This approach continued throughout the event, with the same guide present on our journeys to and from the accommodation.

#### *Recommendations:*

*A volunteer mans each of the buses to and from visits with some information about the sights during the journey and possibly an introduction to the project to be visited.*

*An introduction to the local area, its history and key areas of interest is given as part of the introduction talks.*

*A map of the local area is provided in welcome packs.*

#### Arrival



We were greeted by a row of registration desks and handed a programme, bottle of water and pile of information leaflets. An area of seating was available specifically for international guests which was fairly well used throughout and allowed us to display our banner.

A photographer took pictures of guests arriving in front of the sponsor's banner. I am unclear if these were available to guests online.

A meeting was held for international guests was given explaining a bit about the programme and

translation options. There was a parallel meeting for young people, with some guidance given on how they could ensure that they were listened to during meetings.

#### *Recommendations:*

*An area of seating and display space within the main hall is provided for international guests.*

*There is an introduction for international guests (though more structured and with some information about Scottish culture and politics) and young people.*

*Dedicated volunteers to support young people and international guests throughout.*

## Market Place



Each stall had a 6m x 6m space and they were oversubscribed for places. There were stalls from the main political parties, sponsors and a range of projects showcased. The market was divided into the identified themes for the Rural Parliament. Comfortable seating provided at intervals throughout was well utilised, and there was a performance space and a speakers corner.

### *Recommendations:*

*Seating provided throughout the market place.*

*Tea, coffee and water provided at intervals.*

### **Lunch**

A simple buffet with salad, bread, meat and fish. There was entertainment in the form of a magician and singing comedienne.

## Opening ceremony



The opening session included a fusion of traditional and modern dance and music on the main stage, a welcome from the Chair and an interesting presentation on the 'World's Best Village'. The latter was a presentation for 6 (ish) projects which are having a positive impact in their communities, across a range of themes, in the context of a fictional village.

There were speeches from the Co-Chairs of All Sweden Shall Live and a presentation from Vanessa on the European Rural Parliament.

Two professional presenters introduced everyone and made comments on the proceedings.

### *Recommendations:*

*We adopt the World Best Village idea and showcase the award finalists projects.*

*We provide entertainment to open the event, before we have speakers. This will get everyone's attention and gives an air of celebration to the event.*

## Seminars

Three seminars on specific topics were held during the afternoon.

## Overview of second day

We were given an introduction to the Open Space method to be used the following day.

## Dinner

Close at 9pm.

## DAY 2

An earlier start to the day. We were again greeted by volunteers for the international delegates.

## Open Space



### **FOUR PRINCIPLES**

- Whoever comes are the right people
- Whenever it starts is the right time
- Whatever happens is the only thing that could happen
- When it's over it's over

The chairs were arranged in a large circle when we arrived, with a circle of kneeling mats and papers in the centre. The facilitator introduced the Open Space session, roughly as follows:

- We have no agenda set for today and unless we come up with one we will be just sitting here
- It's up to you to come up with items for the agenda. So when you have one you can come up to the front, write it on a piece of paper and then we will tell everyone what it is. You then choose a time and space (a list of numbered meeting spaces was provided and three time options) and put it on the wall so that people know where to meet you, at what time and to discuss what.
- The person who chooses an agenda item is responsible for starting the discussion and for submitting a report at the end (which was three proposals/recommendations/key points from the discussion).
- It is up to the group how long the discussion lasts and you can carry on as long as you want to, you can have a break and come back to it or you can finish the group early if you want to.
- You don't have to stay in a group, you can use your feet and move to another group or take a break.
- If no-one else turns up to your group you can take the time to think about the problem yourself or you can join another group.
- If you want to move your group to somewhere else you can do that too.

People were then invited to step forward and a total of 69 people did so. Each person wrote their agenda item on the paper and it was then announced what it was to the group. People moved over to the wall and chose a time and space for their discussion.



Once this was complete people were invited to get up and choose the group they were going to attend first. Spaces were provided in the main meeting hall indicated by coloured balloons and in surrounding rooms. Signs were posted to indicate where to find spaces.

The groups and their topics were quickly written up and displayed on a slide projected onto the wall.

Each group had a transcriber who recorded the three main outcomes, the composition of the group (male, female, ages, ethnicity – these were guesses, we weren't asked to provide these), who had proposed the topic and whether all people had opportunities to speak. Towards the end of the session the group were asked by the transcriber for three key points to be recorded.

Each session had a one hour time slot, but there was no pressure to adhere to this.

## Lunch

Simple buffet.

## Open Space: Summary

Towards the end of the day everyone was brought back to the main circle. The topics proposed for discussion were posted on the screen and each was given a number. People were invited to vote by text message for their three priority topics. The results were displayed on the screen and announced to everyone. These were the topics that would then be posed to the politicians the next day.



Following this people were invited to come up to the centre and write out an initiative they had decided to take forward in their community. These were displayed on the wall. A good number of people did so.

Finally people were invited to come up to one of the four microphones in the centre of the room and make a comment. Around 20 people did so.

[I was personally surprised that people weren't invited to submit questions based on the key topics for politicians.

However, many of the topics overlapped and when they had been analysed further ready for the following day, the top issues were somewhat different to those decided upon earlier.]

### Recommendation:

*We adopt this approach for a half-day at the Rural Parliament, allowing for discussion on any topics, preferably the second half of Friday to allow for consideration of any topics arisen earlier or arising from the visits.*



## Seminars

Three additional seminars were held during the second day and none on the final day.

## Close

There were two awards made during the weekend. One for an outstanding individual and another for a project. Both awards had sponsors. There was a brief speech from a Minister here and then a fire-eater took the stage and involved the Co-Chair of All Sweden Shall Live in the entertainment.

## Dinner

A drinks reception was provided before dinner. The dinner was a more lavish affair than the night before, with a menu provided on the table outlining the food and where it came from. A glass of wine was provided for all guests and other drinks were available at the bar. Seating was chosen by guests and not pre-planned. Entertainment was a music, dance and fire show. There were two performance spaces provided for after dinner, with a live band performing on a stage in one and a DJ playing in the other area.

## Day 3

The event was open to the public on the final day, although they were not allowed into the main seating area where the plenary sessions were taking place, so presumably this was to allow them to view the market place stalls only.

## Climate Change Presentation

There was an interesting presentation on climate change with some strong messages coming through. This was well attended.

## Question Time

The five leading political parties all had a representative on the stage for the first hour and they were then joined by representatives from three smaller political parties. There was a two-hour questioning session led by a facilitator and all questions were posed by the facilitator – there was no audience participation.

There was a silent protest whenever the representative from the far right Swedish Democrats spoke with placards displayed.

## Handover to Gotland

There was a brief presentation about the location of the next Rural Parliament and a short handover ceremony.

## Close

The closing presentation was a bit disjointed. Thanks was given to the organisers but people started heading out after the question time.

## Lunch

People were invited to help themselves to a packed lunch.

### *Recommendation:*

*Simple meals and packed lunches were OK.*

*Consider how to engage people until the end point.*

*Include presentations on key topics of interest throughout.*

*Open the market place to the public but ensure invitations to this are sent out to encourage good attendance.*

