**‘What is community heritage, and what is its role in community empowerment?**

When defining 'community heritage', it is important to consider what is commonly understood by the term, and how this definition affects our present day understanding.

          It has been recognised in current academic discourse,most notably by authors such as Laurajane Smith, that dialogue pertaining to heritage has traditionally been dominated by material culture and ‘expert’ opinion.  In so doing, this has ignored swathes of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), more commonly associated with indigenous people, undermining their unique understanding of their environment.  Whilst ICH is now recognised and protected under the 2003 UNESCO Convention, Smith has argued that this historic understanding of what community heritage should or must consist of has had a knock-on effect on our present day understanding of the term.

Efforts are being made to re-address this representation, however.   One model, which encapsulates the entirety of an environment (both tangible and intangible heritage) is the ecomuseum.  Although ecomuseums remain under-represented in the United Kingdom, they continue to prove their worth as facilitators of community empowerment, strengthening identity and stimulating the local economy through related tourism and employment opportunities.

           A pertinent example of an ecomuseum challenging the traditionally held definition of community heritage is *Druim nan Linntean,*the *Skye Ecomuseum.*As the *Skye Ecomuseum*moves into its second phase of development, this paper will use it as a case study in defining community heritage and in evidencing its role as a facilitator of community empowerment.'