Häradsbäck

Country: Sweden

Inhabitants: 158
Type of area: Sparsely populated
Governance: Self organised local governance body
Administrative level: lower than LAU2

About Häradsbäck

Häradsbäck village is a part of **Härlunda parish,** with a total of 450 inhabitants. The village, with 158 inhabitants, is situated not so far from the municipality centre of Älmhult. The inhabitants are mostly older people. Most of the work places are in Älmhult municipality with IKEA as a big employer. Since the 1980s the population has been decreasing with 30%. In the beginning of the 21st century both the local grocery shop, the school and the elderly home were closed.

The village has several decades long history of strategic development to be more attractive, more resilient, offering better access to services, creating jobs and fostering a spirit of togetherness.

Härlunda village association - founded in 1980 originally with the aim to save the local fire brigade from the closure - formed a non profit shareholder company in 2018 (Härlundabygden AB (svb). The shareholders are 10 different associations (sports, farmers, culture etc).

Many projects have been implemented and the continued activities are now owned and managed by the Härlundabygden AB (svb): today there exist a grocery store, a café developed to a restaurant, a library and housing for elderly, all run by the village company. There is an activity park and an activity hall with a bar, boule, billiard, shuffleboard. Recently some parking places for mobile homes have been added with service facilities for sewage, washing room, LPG station and also a charging station for electric cars. All of this is now branded as ”Meeting point Häradsbäck”.

Smartness of Häradsbäck

Häradsbäck inspires with the **long history of joint actions for development.** Over the years the villagers, through the village association and Härlundabygden AB (svb), have managed to achieve funding from different sources with a total amount of more than 3 million euro. Even if many initiatives are started by one or few individuals they are channeled through the Härlundabygden AB(svb) creating an ownership in the whole village. The company has in fact become the single largest employer in the village with a total of 15 employees today.

This holistic view of **securing basic services** e.g grocery store, fast internet connection, an elderly home and an activity centre for both children and adults as well as creating development opportuinities for the future with **tourism and energy production** makes Häradsbäck an inspiring example.

With the energy situation in 2022 and with the aims in Europe to have a fossil free economy soon, the project for **solar voltaic park** in the village is the most interesting initiative for the future. The main technological innovation will be the conversion of electricity in hydrogen gas at a village level for local storage of energy.

The Smart Journey of Häradsbäck

Developing basic services

By 2000s the local grocery shop, the school and the elderly home of the village were closed. Until 2018 when Härlundabygden AB (svb) was established
as a joint development company owned by the associaction the projects and activities were managed through the association of the parish (founded in 1980). The objective of the association was **to secure basic services as well as create development opportunities for the future with tourism and energy production.**

2002

In 2002, after the local grocery shop had gone bankrupt, **the village association took over the premises and started the shop again**. The village association is the owner of the premises and the non-profit shareholder company (Härlundabygden AB) is running the business. In direct connection to the shop a café was established. The office of the village association and the company is based above the shop. The fully equipped conference room can also be used by the other village associations.

Title of initiative: Saving the local shop and adding services
OVERALL BUDGET: €182 900
EU fund : € 81 600 (EAFRD)
Private fund: € 101 300
Duration: 2002 - 2018

Title of initiative: High speed internet to all housholds
OVERALL BUDGET: € 1.250.000
EU fund : € 625 000 (ERDF)
Private fund: € 625 000
Duration: 2007-2014

2007

The Härlunda community association initiated the process of digging **install fiber** in 2007. Five fiber associations were formed
in the parish in order to apply for funding, plan and implement the projects. About 284 household/real estate contributed each of them with € 2 200 in private funds to get fiber. At the end of the project 120 kms of fiber channels were laid down and the village secured its possibilities for communication in the future.

The small **café was expanded into a full restaurant** and the municipality **library** was added, with a librarian a couple of hours a week.

Title of initiative: Cafe developed into restaurant
OVERALL BUDGET: € 196 000
EU fund :€ 58 300 (EAFRD)
Other public funds: € 58 300
Private fund: € 36 000
Other funds: € 43 400 & voluntary work
Duration: 2007 - 2018

2017

In 2010 the elderly home was closed by the the municipality, so the village association decided to buy the premises in order to offer
apartments for elderly people of the village. The caring services are now performed by the municipality home care and Härlundabygden AB (svb) is responsible for renting out the apartments.

Title of initiative: Premises for the elderly home
OVERALL BUDGET: € 626 600
Private fund: € 411 000 (bank loan)
€ 179 000 (private loan), € 36 000 (other)
Duration: 2017 - 2019

Former garage of a taxi company has been converted into an **activity hall** with boule, billiards, shuffle board, a bar, simulators for golf and shooting and space for larger gatherings. An outdoor activity park for children was expanded with a steeplechase course. With the activity hall open the process of creating 'Meeting point Häradsbäck' is almost completed.

Title of initiative: The activity hall
OVERALL BUDGET: € 214 000
EU fund: € 37 500 (EAFRD)
Private fund: € 30 000
Other: € 147 000
Duration: 2018 - 2020

Developing tourism

Offering services to tourists mobile homes (with electricity outlets and sewage service) were developed to make tourists to stay overnight. Public toilet, a shower room and laundry room were built. A **charging station** for electric cars and a service center for LPG (Liquified Petroleum Gas) were established.

Title of initiative: Developing tourism services
OVERALL BUDGET: € 143 000
EU fund: € 53 600 (EAFRD)
Other public funds (e.g national, regional): € 23 000 from the municipality
Private fund: € 66 400 and a lot of voluntary work
Duration: 2017 - 2020

2020

Title of initiative: LPG supply
OVERALL BUDGET: € 170 000.
Other public funds (e.g national, regional): € 125 000
Private fund: € 45 000
Duration: 2018 - 2020

Further Developing basic services

The local store is being developed into a **"hybrid store"** where customers are offered to shop outside normal opening hours in an unmanned shop. The POS (point of sale) system of the store will be integrated into the possibility of also being able to pay via mobile phone.

2022

Title of initiative: Digital solution for the hybrid shop and increased accessibility and energy efficiency in the shop
OVERALL BUDGET: €44 600
EU Fund : € 31 150 (EAFRD)
Private fund: € 13 450
Duration: 2022-ongoing

Solar voltaic park for energy production and storage

The heavy storm Gudrun in 2005, which left many inhabitants without electricity in the area for several weeks, triggered the ideas to prepare for and create stability and security in situations of crisis.

The planned **solar park with energy storage** is aimed to serve as backup to electricity services and to sell hydrogen energy in the future to the trucks and cars passing through the village.

2023

Purchase of land and finding funding for the implementation

The former sawmill area of about 4 hectares, in the center of the village, is purchased together with two additions fields nearby. Three solar voltaic parks will be established: one park for hydrogen production and two parks for the delivery of energy to the public grid, including also storage in batteries. Each of the parks will have the production capacity of 3 MW. The business organisation of the solar voltaic parks will be run under the umbrella of the Härlundabygden AB (svb).

Feasibilitiy study was developed to make a design for the whole energy plant and the design of a theoretic model on how the different components of the system can work together.

Title of initiative: Feasibility study
OVERALL BUDGETt: € 108 700
EU funds: € 1 700
(EAFRD/ LEADER)
Other public funds: € 107 000
(National Innovation Agency, Vinnova)
Duration 2022-2023

Construction of pilot solar voltaic park

Pilot of the whole system will be constructed with solar cells and production of hydrogen possible to scale up to full size when all funding is obtained. Häradsbäck's goal with the pilot is also to find a model for financing, which could be used by other rural areas.

2024

In Focus:
Energy production and storage for crisis preparedness

Goal:

The aim of Häradsbäck is to become as **self sufficient** and **resilient** as possible with regard to **electricity supply to vital services,** especially preparing for block-outs due to weather conditions or other crisis situations. In order to reach its goal the village is planning to build a solar voltaic park for energy production and storage (in hydrogen). With this action Häradsbäck aims to **increase its crisis preparedness** to be able to supply vital services (e.g keeping the fridges in the shop running, being able to supply food in the restaurant, heating the elderly home and keeping the pump station for drinking water) running at least for 14 days in case of electricity shortage. The main technological innovation of the planned solar park will be the conversion of electricity in hydrogen gas at a village level to manage local storage of energy.

Experience to date:

Through **LEADER and The National Innovation Agency (Vinnova)** the association received support to carry out a **feasibility study** with two main objectives:

1) To get an overview about the preconditions, construction and operation of the planned solar park including solar cells, production of hydrogen gas, storage of hydrogen and a hydrogen fuel station (supported by LEADER, March 2022- June 2022)

2) To prepare theoretical & technological design of the solar voltaic park and to increase crisis preparedness (supported by Vinnova National Innovation Agency, June 2022-ongoing)

The feasibility study will be finalised in 2023 and will be complementary to the ordinary system for managing a crisis and contribute to the transition towards a fossil free society. The aim of the study is to increase the awareness about the impact of a crisis on the society and its inhabitants and consider how local communities can be organised to meet these challenges. The feasibility study will have the project specifications to be able to make applications for the investment funding.

"Gudrun (heavy storm in Sweden in 2005) made an impact that we weren't prepared for. Two things were very important. First of all we did not get any help from the outside, we had to do everything by ourselves, we had to rely on our neighbour, on each other (...) We didn't have electricity for more than 30 days (...) So we thought later that we could do something that is good not only for Häradsbäck. We would like to build a model for villages not only in Sweden but maybe in whole Europe to make sure to have local taskforce, which is prepared in crises. The other main thing was also how to make sure that at least part of the society would have life without electricity. If part of Sweden is disconnected from the electricity system we would have still the possibility to supply those five (strategically important e.g water supply, optical fiber etc) points of the village at least for 14 days."

Mette Adolfsson, Project manager Härlundabygden AB (svb)

Next steps:

- Preparation of proof of concept (POC)
- Construction of pilot solar voltaic park
- Preparation of 'digital twin template' of the project description to share openly with other commuities to plan their own project
- Finding funding for the investment of the solar voltaic park
- To overcome possible administrative hurdles regarding the delivery of electricity direct to specific premises and not out on the grid.
- Solving technological challenges in the small scale plant for conversion of electricity to hydrogen and the storage

Governance & participation

Local governance (public sector): Häradsbäck is a village in the municipality of Älmhult, where the public local administration is based. There are no elected leaders for administration at the village level. Through direct contacts between the municipality and the board of the village association and also with the project manager, the public sector is present also in the local development process.

Local community (civil society): There are many civil society and business associations in the parish of Härlunda, including Häradsbäck village. They are associations for sports, farmers, management of sports fishing, retired people, culture, local history and culture etc. They are all represented in the village association. Most of the inhabitants are members of at least one association, even if not all are active members. There is no specific communication platform beside the web site of the village association and the individual associations. Direct personal contacts work well.

Businesses (social enterprises): The village association is the owner of the non profit shareholder company, which is running the businesses like the shop, the restaurant and the tourism services. So the private sector is in a sense embedded in the village association. The local branch of the farmers federation (LRF) is also an important actor in the parish, and is represented in the village association. The non profit shareholder company will be managing the solar voltaic business, but the premises will probably be owned by the village association.

Research (scientific sector): Professor Malin Tillmar at the Linné university is doing research on the development process in Häradsbäck. The theme of the research project (that includes 5 other villages beside Häradsbäck) is "Entrepreneurship for socio-ecological change in the countryside". The research project is about the key factors that are necessary to initiate and run development processes in rural areas.

Community engagement process

The community engagement is channeled through the village association, its member organisations and the non-profit shareholder company. The village association, founded in 1980, formed in 2018 a non-profit shareholder company (Härlundabygden AB), a company with limitations for how to use profits with 10 different associations in the parish (sports, farmers, culture, etc.) as shareholders.

Since the number of village inhabitants (158) and for the whole parish (450) is low, the direct contacts between people are easy. The 10 associations forming the shareholders in the Härlunda AB are representing most of the inhabitants.

The board members represent the associations and all their members. Many inhabitants are members in more than one association. Through their representatives in the board of Härlunda AB they have a direct voice in the planning and implementation of activities and projects. With all the services offered in Häradsbäck, the shop, the restaurant and the activity hall have become a place where the inhabitants meet and can engage and discuss the development and the needs for the community. There are often informal discussions and suggestions on what has been done and what is planned. The Härlunda AB is also inviting to information meetings to keep the inhabitants informed and to have a transparent development work.

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Further information:
Website of Häradsbäck: *https://haradsback.se*
Smart Rural 27 village profile of Häradsbäck: *https://www.smartrural27.eu/village/haradsback/*