

Bute Report



Island: Bute

Date: 24/05/2019

This report has been produced by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law and Governance (SCELG) and Scottish Island Federation (SIF) in the framework of their collaboration with the Islands Team of the Scottish Government. The goal of this report is to capture the essence of the discussions that have taken place at the consultation event on Bute. The report will be sent out to participants who authorised us to do so in order to receive further comments and feedback. The report is not to be considered as an indication of what will ultimately go into the National Island Plan, but it will inform the latter. The report is also not to be considered as an indication of the position of Scottish Government on any of the points mentioned therein.

Introduction

On 24 May 2019 a consultation event took place on Bute between 5:30pm and 8pm. The event was attended by 32 people and the goal was to capture both what works well on the island and the challenges faced by the community on Bute. The consultation is required by the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, as a means to inform the National Islands Plan that Scottish Government will be presenting to Scottish Parliament on 4 October 2019.

Bute as a great place to live

The consultation highlighted the following things that make living on Bute great:

- Connectivity
- Environment
- Health and well-being
- Education
- History
- Community
- Services & infrastructure



Participants to the Bute event highlighted Bute as an island with a strong community and tranquil natural environment that facilitates a good sense of health and wellbeing for residents. Participants also underlined the benefits of Bute as an island with good connectivity to the mainland and cities such as Glasgow, as well as good digital connectivity. The history that permeates Bute is an important aspect of the culture and sense of place on the island and is indeed one of the reasons why people love living on the island and why it attracts so many visitors. There are a wide range of good services, including good health services, schools, a wide range of shops

which support locals in being 'self-sufficient' as well as a variety of sporting facilities and opportunities such as the golf club and marina,

Challenges on Bute

The consultation moved on to discuss the current challenges on Bute and the main concerns of the island community. The following are the main issues that were shared by the participants at the event (see Annex for more details):

- Depopulation
- Economic Development
- Environmental Protection
- Health and wellbeing
- Community empowerment
- Transport
- Digital Connectivity
- Fuel Poverty
- Land management
- Large regional control - Breakdown so control is closer to use - devolved authority: Buteshire
- Lack of support to return Bute Brewery
- Proposed developments that are not environmentally neutral/positive
- Restore castle
- Restore Ettrick Tram
- Require increased and improved tourist attractions
- Support required for active sports: mountain bike trails, kayaking, boat trips



The National Islands Plan and the Response from the Participants

During the consultation, several key challenges were discussed in greater detail. We wish to make it very clear that a more in depth focus was undertaken for the purposes of the face-to-face consultation, and should not be considered as any indication of prioritisation in the framework of the National Islands Plan.

The areas discussed more in depth were:

- Transport
- Economic Development
- Environment
- Land Management
- Devolved Authority

For each, participants were asked to provide more details about the challenge, their proposed solution, next steps, who should undertake these next steps and when. The following are the suggestions that we believe stemmed from the participants present at the consultation on Bute:

Challenge	Suggestion from participants
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review ferry infrastructure, including vessel stock, pier and landing infrastructure with a view to investing where necessary in order to increase resilience of ferry services and confidence within ferry operators.
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a start-up/entrepreneurial support unit and finance packages to support young/new innovative companies. • Review of taxation on second homes and holiday lets in light of case study practices from other geographical



	<p>areas or sectors, with view to ensuring availability of affordable family homes.</p>
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review ferry practices and stock to progress towards non-fossil fuel ferries, and encourage ferry operators to increase awareness of the impact idle engines in queues. • Review the environmental threshold of potential developments and increase ambition on environmental targets with a view to considering the benefits of placing Bute as a market-leader in a 0 carbon economy.
Land Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review current abattoir policy and fund scoping study of the benefits and feasibility of permanent or mobile abattoir facilities on Bute to support local produce production. • Review Land Reform Act to ensure support for local representation on boards of privately owned estates and consider mandatory long term security of tenurship, and provision of available land for new business or young farmers.
Devolved Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review current local governance structure and fund a scoping study on the potential benefits and impacts of a devolved authority on Bute or development of a Clyde Islands Group.

Bute Vision

Island communities know that good governance requires an integrated and holistic approach to policy. We wish to stress once again that the National Islands Plan and



its implementation will not address specific issues in isolation, but rather will consider all factors together whilst taking into account their crosscutting nature. In addition, each island has its own unique character and its own unique challenges. From the consultation on Bute we have identified the following specific traits to Bute:

Firstly, Bute is a prime example of how many, if not all, outcomes that need to be improved are inter-linked and need to be considered together. Above all is community empowerment, and reforming current governance systems to enable decisions to be taken as close as possible to use and with active local participation. The participants made it abundantly clear that they want authority to be devolved to Bute. The community are aware of the radical change that this will require within the existing local authority and consider a timeline to 2025 appropriate for this. It was acknowledged, however, that as well as devolved authority from a council perspective, local representation on the boards of Estate owners would be required in order to ensure true local decision making and challenge to private estate owners.

Secondly, it is considered that if the island community were more in charge of decision making affecting the island that the system would be more agile to sustainable development opportunities that support and enhance 'Bute Identity'. For example, there is a strong sense that development of a 'Bute Brand' would enhance economic development but that, in order for this to be realized, reform is required to land management (security of tenure and release of land for young business/farmers), and that development of an on-island abattoir (static or mobile), currently prohibited, would enable truly 'Bute branded' produce and reduce production costs.

Support for the development of the 'Bute Brand' could be incentivized through more support for young innovative companies. Repairs to ageing infrastructure was also



considered as a must in order to attract and retain businesses. Linked to this, however, is the need for more affordable housing, particularly for young people and families. Tax on second homes and holiday lets should be considered in order to ensure that affordable housing stock is available to young residents. Return of Bute Brewery is considered to be a real opportunity, however this requires connectivity across transport and land availability.

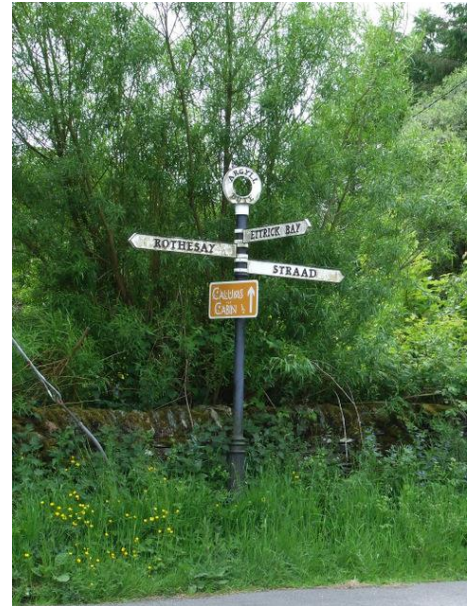
Thirdly, the community on Bute have a strong sense of the need to protect their natural, tranquil environment. Whilst acknowledging that environmental ambitions must in turn support economic development, there is an ambition amongst the community to place Bute at the fore of sustainable development and move towards a '0 carbon island'. This involves integration and cross working amongst locals, but also in decision making that supports only developments with neutral or positive environmental impact. For example, the proposed fish farms are highly controversial and considered by many to be unsustainable. Change would also be required within service providers, most notably the ferry provider to move away from fossil fueled vessels.

Indeed, the ferry and wider transport (buses, trams, private transport) were discussed at length. The proximity of Bute to the mainland offers opportunities; however, the lack of resilience in current ferry operations was highlighted as a real challenge to connectivity, economic development and transport. There is a sense that current ferry providers' operate a 'zero risk' policy which results in frequent ferry cancellations as a result of weather. It was acknowledged that the infrastructure at Wemyss Bay was not fit for purpose – particularly given the move to only using 1 side of the pier, exposed to strong southerly winds.

What now?



First and foremost, we wish to thank those who attended the consultation events on Bute. We encourage you to fill in the on-line consultation at <https://consult.gov.scot/agriculture-and-rural-communities/national-islands-plan/>. You can find the consultation document that provides background information about the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, the National Islands Plan and the Islands Communities Impact Assessment at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-islands-plan-islands-communities-impact-assessment-guidance-consultation/>.



More importantly, please send us any comments/feedback on this report at n.crook@strath.ac.uk

The National Islands Plan will only be useful if it is truly informed by the island communities and by all those who have an interest and a stake in Scottish islands. Thanks to your participation in the consultation event and your comments and feedback, we are confident that the work being undertaken towards the National Islands Plan is capturing the voice of island communities. We are also sure that this is only the beginning and that, together, we can make sure that the National Islands Plan is not just “another” plan, but “The Plan” that works for island communities in Scotland.

Useful links:

- *On-line consultation - <https://consult.gov.scot/agriculture-and-rural-communities/national-islands-plan/>*



- Consultation document - <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-islands-plan-islands-communities-impact-assessment-guidance-consultation/>
- Islands (Scotland) Act 2018
- Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law and Governance (SCELG) - <https://www.strath.ac.uk/research/strathclydecentreenvironmentallawgovernance/>
- Scottish Island Federation (SIF) - <http://www.scottish-islands-federation.co.uk/>
- SCELG portal on the consultation - <https://www.strath.ac.uk/research/strathclydecentreenvironmentallawgovernance/ourwork/research/labsincubators/eilean/islandsscotlandact/consultations/>





Annex

Challenges about living and working on Bute

-Depopulation	-Economic Development	-Transport
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Opportunities for young people (training, social opportunities, etc.) ➤ Late ferry-passenger ferry ➤ Increase population – families ➤ Attract more youngsters – involve in local decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ More affordable premises for small businesses ➤ Increase employment – especially professional ➤ Incentivizing people to live/visit (business and residents) ➤ Bute branded business (like Arran) ➤ Tourism development: café culture, arts and entertainment, national theatre, fish restaurant, dark sky island ➤ Decorate and maintain the front, demolish renovate eyesores ➤ Sustainable development – not fish farms 	<p>Ferries - lifeline</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reliable 24 hour ferry services ➤ 24 hour electric ferries ➤ Wemyss Bay improvements – so no ferry issues due to weather ➤ Last Ferry from Mainland ➤ Change CalMac Management, structure – culture ➤ Improved resilience for ferries (-Wemyss Bay terminal) ➤ Need Ferry/vessel to hop Arran, Campbeltown, Tignabruaich, Rothesay, Dunoon, Largs ➤ Bus ferry transport CalMac reworked <p>More water transport</p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Refocus tourism product➤ Build new housing➤ Housing: stop Air BnB, short term lets➤ Affordable housing➤ Involvement of local community in decision making➤ Own bank➤ Fish farms? Location issues➤ Large hotel – spa➤ Expansion of outdoor activities➤ Compulsory selling of rundown houses – encourage refurbishment➤ Observatory➤ Calmac ferry television show Bute marketing, improve role in marketing Bute➤ Training opportunities for 18-25 year olds➤ 1st class connectivity - Enable competitive IT Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Utilise water more for transport (like Venice!)➤ Tunnel/bridge to mainland➤ Pedestrian boat to Glasgow➤ Tunnel Culintraive➤ Bridge to Dunoon <p>On island Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Electric buses and trams➤ Publically available cheap e-bikes➤ Airport (electric planes)➤
--	---	--





	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reopen local abattoir or mobile abattoir ➤ Local fish landing-sale 	
<p>-Digital Connectivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ First class I.T Connectivity ➤ Good internet for whole island ➤ Rural internet improvement 	<p>Environmental Protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ University of the Environment ➤ Marine National Park ➤ Environmental protection and development of natural resources ➤ Check water quality more often ➤ Use of tide/wave energy production ➤ Building environment improvement – e.g. Royal Hotel, Montague Street, empty shops ➤ Build model eco-village ➤ Cleaner streets ➤ Flood barriers or plan to move people from areas of rising sea impact ➤ Recycle everything 	<p>Land management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Land reform ➤ Young farmers need opportunities ➤ Home grown sustainable food system ➤ Not polluting fish farms ➤ Clyde protection environment policy/planning policy reform ➤ Proper development of wood/forestry on the island – planting and processing ➤ Maintain roads, beaches ➤ Use semi-derelict building, refurb & use ➤ Refurbish all derelict building and farms ➤ Security of tenure for farmers



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Zero carbon island 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Let out run-down farms to other businesses ➤ Break-up of large owner land control
<p>-Community empowerment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ "Buteshire" local government reform ➤ Connectivity especially communication: newspaper, round island transport, better internet ➤ Devolve power to Bute council ➤ Disband A&B Council to create more local control 	<p>-Fuel poverty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Own energy generation ➤ Bring back feed-in-tariff ➤ Improved sustainability (power generation – tidal, wind biomass) waste management... 	<p>- Health and Wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ More residential places for elderly ➤ Restore hospital ➤ Education: staffing recruitment & retainment quantity ➤ Dentist – without 3 year waiting list ➤ Improved access for disabled people ➤ Health spa – fresh air, water & jobs ➤ Indoor entertainment – young and old ➤ Organise a marathon ➤ Have the hospital as it once was – full service, training nurses ➤ Kids indoor activities – better pool, climbing wall etc. ➤ Youth club activities



Active sports: mountain bike trails, kayaking, boat trips	Return of Bute Brewery	Devolved authority: Buteshire
Deny any development that is not environmentally neutral/positive	Restoration <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Restore castle➤ Restore Ettrick Tram➤ Increased and improved tourist attractions	

