



Canna Report



Island: Canna

Date: 13/05/2019

This report has been produced by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law and Governance (SCELG) and Scottish Islands 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 Canna. 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 the morning of the 13th of May 2019, a focus group took place on the Isle of Canna. The event was attended by 8 people and the goal was to capture both what works well on the island and the challenges faced by the community on Canna. 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.

Canna as a great place to live

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

- Environment
- Healthcare
- Community Spirit
- Ferry Service
- Digital Connectivity (HebNet)
- Renewable Energy Generation
- Economic Opportunity
- National Trust for Scotland
- Community Development Trust
- History & Culture



It is evident that there are many things that make Canna a fantastic place to live. The list above only affords a glimpse, but it does highlight that there is a true sense of a community between the 18 residents, and that they are very proud of the island; *'for such a small island, it has such a lot to offer.'* The current windfarm was cited as being transformative for the community, whilst the current healthcare service available in the form of once fortnightly visits by the GP and nurse practitioner (with a drug cabinet on island) was stated as being excellent. The natural beauty of the landscape and the wildlife it supports are crucial to island life, whilst culture and history are seen as being vital to continued growth. Digital connectivity, as provided by the HebNet, offers a



reliable and affordable service, and there is ample opportunity for economic development on the island, albeit for specific skill sets. It should be noted that whilst the areas of transport and National Trust of Scotland ownership were mentioned as positive aspects, these issues were slightly contentious and were also noted as ‘challenges’ which are discussed in more detail below.

Challenges on Canna

The consultation moved on to discuss the current challenges on Canna and the main concerns of the island community. The following are the main issues that were shared by the participants at the event:

- Stopping Population Decline
- Economic Development
- Environmental Protection
- Healthcare
- Community empowerment
- Transport
- Digital Connectivity
- Land Management
- Housing
- Local energy generation
- NTS Ownership





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 prioritization in the framework of the National Islands Plan.

The areas discussed more in depth were:

- Increasing Population levels
- Recycling
- Transport
- Economic Development

The following are the suggestions that we believe stemmed from the participants present at the consultation on Canna:

Challenge	Suggestion from participants
Increase Population Levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and implement an island focused housing policy that creates locally affordable housing stock, which is aimed at retaining the population across all age groups.
Recycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider specific funding stream to undertake research on recycling on small islands like Canna in order to better understand the waste patterns and potential of a circular economy in its disposal. ▪ Revise current waste/recycling policy to better serve islands, with more frequent pickups and transparent recycling routes from island to mainland.
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review and reform of the ferry/public buses (transport policy) in line with island communities' interests and priorities



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Need for integrated transport policy and timetable, as transport for island communities is not just a service (it's a lifeline, it's a right). ▪ Introduction of public subsidies for travel costs for islanders. ▪ Revise RET to include freight & commercial vehicles.
<p>Economic Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure that facilities are improved on the mainland (Mallaig) to prevent 'bottlenecks' which essentially discourage tourists from visiting. ▪ Development of targeted promotional campaign by the Scottish Government, aimed at 'low impact' tourism.

Canna 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 Canna we have identified the following specific traits to Canna:

It is evident that housing and economy development are crucial to increasing the population of the island, and need to be adapted and reconsidered having island communities at the heart of such policies. These two areas have very strong and immediate positive ripple effects if dealt with properly. However, both cannot and should not be developed centrally considering rural communities and island communities on the periphery.

That being said, participants stressed that an ideal population number would remain under 50 people. Additionally, an appropriate balance has to be struck between increasing tourism and retaining the unique identity of the island, with the objective of attracting 'low impact' tourists. Consequently, it would be pertinent to include Canna as part of a targeted promotional campaign



by the Scottish Government, with the aim of boosting tourism and therefore providing scope to increase economic infrastructure on the island i.e. the development of more eateries and accommodation. However, such a campaign has to be sensitive to the fragility of the island environment, to prevent an influx of high impact tourists.

The transport sector highlights the discrepancy and ineffectiveness of policies adopted and sought by non-islanders. There is a need to revise this sector to ensure that it is driven by island communities, and that it is recognised as being a ‘lifeline’ service for islanders rather than just an economic service. This reveals a wider dissatisfaction with community empowerment and local governance.

It should be noted that Canna is owned by the National Trust for Scotland (NTS), and that whilst the islanders were careful to stress that this has, by and large, previously been a positive for the island, it has also resulted in restrictions for economic development and housing, particularly in relation to the building on, or leasing of, land. This manifests itself as the island being part of an NTS ‘island portfolio’, with the island community consequently feeling that undue restrictions are placed on them which don’t accurately take into consideration the unique situation of Canna i.e. NTS tend to focus on renovating derelict buildings for housing, whilst islanders feel that these would be better suited as business spaces and new, affordable housing should be developed separately. Increased housing capacity is a challenge for the island, with the need to retain the population across generational age particularly dependent on essential improvements. This is particularly important for the retention of the older population. However, provision has been put in place to allow the oldest resident to live on Canna with a live in carer, which is something to be commended. Nevertheless, it is essential that sustained and transparent dialogue is undertaken between the NTS and the community of Canna to ensure that an island focused housing policy is developed which creates locally affordable housing stock that can be appropriately used by the community.



Additionally, there is a significant lack of support and resources for community projects, with previous requests to both NTS and Highlands and Island Enterprise for dedicated staff, such as a development officer, being unsuccessful. Community projects, such as off-grid renewables, should be supported by the Government, with adequate funding and staff support provided to ensure that an active, forward thinking community like that on Canna is able to thrive, but not at the detriment of the health and wellbeing of its already extremely busy residents.





What now?

First and foremost we wish to thank those who attended the consultation events on Canna. 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/>

