

## Coll Report



Island: Coll

Date: 26/06/2019

*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 Coll. 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 26<sup>th</sup> of June 2019, a consultation event took place on Coll. The event was attended by 28 people and the goal was to capture both what works well on the island and the challenges faced by the community on Coll. 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.

## Coll as great places to live

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

- Sense of community
- Safety
- Raising children
- Nature and wildlife
- Heritage and culture
- The services
- Simple way of life
- Being able to isolate oneself
- Regular summer visitors
- Project Trust



It is evident that there are many things that make Coll 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 residents, and that they value what the unique environment affords them in terms of safety, landscape and wildlife. The culture and history of the islands are also seen as crucial to island life, whilst the presence of the Project Trust on the island was also seen as a huge positive by participants.



## Challenges on Coll

The consultation moved on to discuss the current challenges on Coll, 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):

- Stopping Population Decline
- Economic Development
- Environmental Protection
- Health and Wellbeing
- Community Empowerment
- Environment
- Transport
- Digital Connectivity
- Fuel Poverty
- Biosecurity
- No one size fits all
- Gaelic in school
- Abattoir
- Better standard of rented properties
- Need our own councilor





## 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:

- Transport
- Stopping Population Decline
- Environment
- Economic Development

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

Challenge	Suggestion from participants
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review transport policy so that it fully takes into account the fragility of island communities (transport for island communities is not just a service, it's a lifeline, it's a right).</li> <li>▪ Explore the possibility of introducing priority booking for islanders for both ferries and air travel.</li> <li>▪ Organise and support an annual Transport Summit for islands that will focus on integrated timetables and better commuter ferries.</li> <li>▪ Revise Calmac/Loganair contract to ensure cohesion between transport links.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Explore the possibility of a dedicated Islands Road Fund to guarantee a minimum standard and regular maintenance across all of Scotland's island.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Stopping Population Decline</b></p>	<p>Commitments for public sector:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Revisal of current housing policy taking into account the specific needs of island communities.</li> <li>▪ Revision of local service funding to develop facilities that encourage the retention and integration of young families into the community.</li> <li>▪ Consider the possibility of developing on island opportunities, such as a 'gateway house' to allow potential residents to experience island life with less financial pressure.</li> <li>▪ Support a marketing campaign to raise awareness of Coll and promote people to resettle there.</li> <li>▪ Revise current healthcare system to ensure that it provides 'cradle to grave' care for island communities.</li> <li>▪ Explore the possibility of funding schemes to encourage the development of small, local businesses on the island.</li> <li>▪ Explore funding options for business space and training that can promote the entrepreneurial potential of island communities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Environment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ We will review the environmental threshold of potential developments and increase ambition on environmental targets.</li> <li>▪ We will engage with local authorities to develop a strategy for renewables and employment in consultation with island communities.</li> <li>▪ Support and invest in the revision of current island infrastructure (travel and energy supply) to better support the greening of the island economy.</li> </ul>





	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ We will engage with the private sector to encourage benefit sharing with the island communities and ensure environmental safeguards are put in place.</li> <li>▪ We will develop further infrastructure to support on-site island recycling and/or better transport of waste from the islands, with the appropriate funding streams and revise current waste/recycling policy to better serve islands, with more frequent pickups and transparent recycling routes from island to mainland.</li> <li>▪ Ensure that the revised Port Reception Facilities (PRF) regulations are extended to plastic recycling, and include all fishing vessels to encourage safe disposal of redundant fishing gear as well as fishing gear and other plastic.</li> <li>▪ Continue to encourage, support and resource community based educational campaigns to encourage the public to ‘Bag It and Bin It’ and engage the business community in more widespread plastic recycling to reduce the amount of plastic debris reaching the environment.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Economic Development</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Recognise that boosting economic development on an island requires joint thinking with other policies such as, for example, housing, transport, digital connectivity.</li> <li>▪ Improve digital connectivity to allow for remote working to take place on the island.</li> <li>▪ Revise current legislation to ensure that it is island proofed and does not obstruct the development of the island economy.</li> <li>▪ Explore the possibility of funding schemes to encourage the development of small, local businesses on the island.</li> </ul>



- Explore the possibility of supporting the local community in creating a Coll brand to adequately promote the uniqueness of the island and encourage economic development and further tourism outwith peak season.
- Support a targeted marketing campaign to encourage slow, year round tourism on Coll.

### Coll 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 Coll we have identified the following specific traits to Coll:

The transport sector highlights the discrepancy and ineffectiveness of policies adopted and sought by non-islanders. The current infrastructure in place for both ferries, air travel and road use on Coll does not provide the necessary 'lifeline' service that the island community is reliant on. There is a need to revise the transport sector to ensure that it is driven by island communities, and that it is fully recognized as being a 'lifeline' service for islanders rather than just an economic service. A revision of current transport policy, to guarantee appropriate infrastructure is in place, as well as ensuring joined up timetabling between services, would be transformative for the island community, and have ripple effects in many other areas including tourism and economic development.

In terms of increasing the current population of Coll, islanders indicated that in order to ensure longevity, more young families with children must be encouraged to live on the island. It is vital that the interlinkages required between numerous sectors in order to provide an environment that promotes repopulation are fully realised. It is evident that increasing the availability of



affordable, fit for purpose housing and improving economic development are crucial to increasing the economically active demographic on the islands. However, both sectors need to be adapted and reconsidered having island communities at the heart of such policies.

Boosting economic development on an island requires joint thinking with other policies such as housing, transport and digital connectivity. However, participants on Coll emphasised that the short tourist season and poor digital connectivity were key barriers to sustainable economic development on the island. The allocation of dedicated funding streams and targeted marketing campaigns to extend the current tourist season, as well as increased support for small local businesses and the improvement of digital connectivity across the island, would drastically boost the current economy of the island whilst simultaneously creating jobs to encourage young people to remain, or return, to Coll.

Finally, it is evident that environmental concerns are crucial to the island community, and include recycling, biosecurity and improving environmental awareness. Consequently, there is a need to recognise the potential of islands to act as research hubs going forward – with recycling not just seen as an environmental issue, but as an economic opportunity that island communities could benefit from if afforded the proper support. This also requires stronger policy and enforcement mechanisms to protect current biodiversity and raise the environmental awareness of both islanders and visitors.







### **What now?**

First and foremost we wish to thank those who attended the consultation event on Coll. 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](mailto: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 Coll

<p><b>-Depopulation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holiday homes</li> <li>• Jobs for families</li> <li>• Need for more families with young children</li> <li>• Affordable housing</li> <li>• Quality primary education</li> <li>• Year round jobs</li> <li>• Cost of living</li> </ul>	<p><b>-Economic Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water for whole island</li> <li>• Promotion of remote working opportunities</li> <li>• Fewer holiday homes</li> <li>• Affordable housing</li> <li>• More job opportunities</li> <li>• Island split between those who have and those who have not</li> <li>• Cost of freight</li> </ul>	<p><b>-Transport</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery surcharges</li> <li>• Road surfaces improved</li> <li>• Post bus</li> <li>• Freight costs</li> <li>• Transport costs</li> <li>• No threat to air service and government investment in CalMac</li> <li>• Priority reservation on ferries for islanders</li> <li>• Reinstate Monday flight</li> <li>• Investment in ferry stock</li> <li>• Improve reliability of ferry service</li> <li>• Revise ferry timetabling to suit island rather than mainland</li> <li>• More island inter ferry services so we can support each other</li> </ul>
<p><b>- Community Empowerment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less red tape</li> <li>• Simplified management structure for interest groups (allowing for low population)</li> <li>• Cooperative supplies</li> </ul>	<p><b>- Environmental protection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ban on mobile fishing gear</li> <li>• Local management of coastal water</li> <li>• More recycling services</li> <li>• G4/G5 affective nature (scientific evidence)</li> <li>• Progress at wat cost to the environment</li> <li>• Fish farms = environmental degradation</li> </ul>	<p><b>-Health and wellbeing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dental service</li> <li>• Community nurse with managers support</li> <li>• Playpark with all weather sports pitch</li> <li>• Mains water for all</li> <li>•</li> </ul>



<b>-Fuel poverty</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cost of fuel &amp; availability</li><li>• Be encouraged to use biofuel rather than being fined</li></ul>	<b>- Digital Connectivity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fibre optic broadband</li><li>• Better internet</li><li>• Improved broadband and mobile</li></ul>	<b>-Biosecurity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bees</li><li>• Fishfarm</li></ul>
<b>-Other</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No one size fits all</li><li>• Gaelic in school</li><li>• Abattoir</li><li>• Better standard of rented properties</li><li>• Need our own councilor</li></ul>		

