



## Colonsay Report



Island: Colonsay

Date: 17/04/2019

*This report has been produced by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law and Governance (SCELG) and Scottish Islands Federation (SIF) in the framework of its 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 Colonsay. 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 17 April 2019 a consultation event took place at the Community Hall in Scalasaig between 2:30pm and 5:00pm. The event was attended by 12 people and the goal was to capture both what works well on the island and the challenges faced by the community on Colonsay. 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.

## Colonsay as a great place to live

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

- Community Spirit
- Environment
- Medical services
- Sense of identity
- Remoteness





Overall, there appears to be a great sense of community on the island, even between those who are originally from Colonsay and those who are not. The pristine environment and its remoteness bring out the best in the people living on Colonsay, making them rediscover themselves.

### **Challenges on Colonsay**

The consultation moved on to discuss what are the current challenges on Colonsay 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):

- Increasing Population
- Economic Development
- Health & Wellbeing
- Community Empowerment
- Transport
- Digital Connectivity
- Fuel Poverty
- Land Management
- Biosecurity
- Planning
- Support for school age parents
- Secondary education





### **The National Islands Plan and the Response from the Participants**

During the consultation four 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 four areas discussed more in depth were:

- Transport (air and ferries)
- Depopulation
- Economic Development
- Digital Connectivity

For each, participants were asked to provide more details about the challenge, their proposed solution, next steps and 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 Colonsay:



Challenge	Suggestion from participants
Transport (Air)	<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>Legal requirement for community input into revision of integrated transport timetabling</li> </ul>
Transport (Ferry)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review RET to include freight business and commercial</li> <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> </ul>
Depopulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognizing where there is a genuine crisis, which if not dealt with urgently could lead to the community on the island to become unsustainable</li> <li>Balance land owner rights and responsibilities</li> <li>Focus on appropriate housing that is locally affordable as an essential right, which, if dealt with properly, will have a positive ripple effect</li> </ul>
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop integrated policies (transport, communication, digital connectivity, for example)</li> <li>Land reform (if you have land you have duties and not only rights)</li> <li>Proper development of local democracy (decisions should be guided or take place as close as possible where the impact will be felt)</li> </ul>
Digital connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Digital connectivity reform policy that aims to develop, implement and enforce legally binding minimum standards on islands</li> <li>Focus on anti-competition rules and brake monopoly of provider (Openreach – BT)</li> </ul>



## Colonsay Vision

Island communities know probably even more than communities on the mainland that good governance requires an integrated and holistic approaches 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 Colonsay we have identified the following specific traits to Colonsay.

Firstly, increasing population levels is critical, not just desirable for Colonsay. The reduction in population from the 2011 census is worrying and, if active measures are not in place urgently, Colonsay as a sustainable island community will suffer.

Secondly, in order for Colonsay to thrive and for the population to increase there is an urgent need for locally affordable housing, especially for the young people who wish to live on the island. There is a real challenge with the presence of so many second homes on the island (60% of the housing stock), hence presenting a clash between the economic opportunities of the owner of the second home to make a profit from her/his property and the right of the member of the island community to receive affordable housing.

Third, there is appetite for increased community empowerment in the sense of creating a system by which the island community can take increased “ownership” of the decisions that affect and impact (positively and negatively) the island. In order for the island community to be more empowered there needs to be a greater interaction with the private landowner of Colonsay, who should be seen not only as having rights over his land, but also duties over the island he owns and the community that lives there.



Fourth, transport should not be seen just as a service on Colonsay. For a community like the one on Colonsay, ferry and air transport becomes a lifeline. It is how the young people come back for the weekends during term-time, it is how older people can get quickly (or not) to a hospital when needed, it is how essential food supplies get to the island. It is not only, as suggested, that the transport providers should be more integrated. The island community wishes to open up a debate on transport as something that cannot and should not be measured only in monetary terms.



### **What now?**

First and foremost we wish to thank those who attended the consultation event on Colonsay. 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 Colonsay

<p><b>-Increasing Population</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ More young people</li> <li>➤ Social housing support for the young</li> <li>➤ Build affordable housing</li> </ul>	<p><b>-Economic Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Broaden the development</li> <li>➤ Long term vision for change and growth</li> <li>➤ Mix of 'old jobs' and 'new jobs'</li> <li>➤ Full time work</li> <li>➤ Business space</li> <li>➤ Turn islands into innovation hubs</li> <li>➤ Better communications (phones)</li> <li>➤ Need to break up family owned monopoly</li> </ul>	<p><b>-Environmental Protection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Employment</li> </ul>
<p><b>-Health &amp; Wellbeing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Riding area</li> <li>➤ Sports facilities</li> <li>➤ Training facilities</li> <li>➤ Dr and nurse currently up for retirement.</li> </ul>	<p><b>-Community Empowerment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Protection of culture</li> <li>➤ Gaelic medium education</li> <li>➤ Availability Abattoir (island self-sufficiency)</li> </ul>	<p><b>-Transport</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ More transport links to the island (as there used to be)</li> <li>➤ Better ferry links</li> <li>➤ Longer runway and more flights</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Own government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Cheaper transport costs</li> <li>➤ Cheaper fuel</li> <li>➤ Pay road tax but no benefits             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Possibility of road tax deduction for islands?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>-Digital Connectivity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Fiberoptic</li> <li>➤ Better broadband</li> </ul>	<p><b>-Fuel Poverty</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Cheaper cost of living (freight ferry)</li> </ul>	<p><b>-Land Management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Part 5 land reform implemented</li> </ul>
<p><b>-Planning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Zero waste</li> <li>➤ Local place             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Land value capture (affordability policy)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>-Support for school age parents</b></p>	<p><b>-Secondary education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Home school education</li> </ul>

