

## Eigg Report



Island: Eigg

Date: 14/05/2019

*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 Eigg. 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 14<sup>th</sup> May 2019 a consultation event took place on Eigg between 1.30pm and 4pm. The event was attended by 20 people, including children from the local primary school, and the goal was to capture both what works well on the island and the challenges faced by the community on Eigg. 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.

## Eigg as a great place to live

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

- Natural Environment
- Innovative Community
- Culture and Heritage
- Community Spirit
- Community Owned Island
- Safe and friendly
- Education



It is evident that there are many things that make Eigg a fantastic place to live. The list above only affords a glimpse, but it does highlight that there is a true sense of community on the island, with the participants highlighting cross-generational links and a supportive environment as being of particular importance. The islanders are also extremely proud that their island is community owned; *'self-determination allows us to take responsibility for things that matter to us'*, which they feel also fosters innovation, particularly in relation to renewable energy. They also relish the natural beauty and space of the landscape, whilst culture and history are seen as being vital to continued growth.

## Challenges on Eigg

The consultation moved on to discuss the current challenges on Eigg 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):

- Economic Development
- Environmental Protection
- Health and Wellbeing
- Community Empowerment
- Transport
- Fuel Poverty
- Land Management
- Housing
- Local Energy Generation
- Local Food Security
- Preservation of Culture and Heritage
- Ecologically sustainable agriculture/aquaculture



## 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:

- Housing
- Electricity
- Carbon Zero
- Economic Development

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 Eigg:

Challenge	Suggestion from participants
<b>Housing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop and implement an island focused housing policy that creates locally affordable housing stock, which is tailored to the needs of specific islands.</li> <li>▪ Better understand what “locally affordable” means when it comes to specific islands</li> <li>▪ Recognise the positive ripple effect that an island focused housing strategy will have on the sustainability of the islands and their repopulation.</li> <li>▪ Integrated housing &amp; infrastructure strategy to ensure that both areas support one another.</li> </ul>





<b>Electricity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Scottish Government to engage with local authorities to develop a strategy for renewables and employment in consultation with island communities.</li><li>▪ Frame micro-grids on off-grid islands as lifeline services that require special attention</li><li>▪ Explore the possibility of a dedicated fund solely focused on the development of renewable island energy.</li><li>▪ Support further research into the needs of, and current good practices, of off grid islands – whilst facilitating an open forum to allow these ideas to be shared.</li></ul>
<b>Carbon Zero</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Revision of current recycling/waste disposal system to adequately support islanders who wish to have autonomy over own waste schemes.</li><li>▪ Support the revision of current island infrastructure (travel and energy supply) to better support the greening of island economy.</li><li>▪ Marketing campaign to encourage reduction of carbon use, holding the likes of Eigg as a potential hub of innovation which could wield good practices.</li><li>▪ Dedicated fund to support to development of local food production, viewed in the framework of a circular economy.</li></ul>
<b>Economic Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Recognise that boosting economic development on an island requires joint thinking with other policies and opportunities beyond those directly focusing on the island</li><li>▪ Provide support for island communities to explore economic opportunities both within, and outwith, their islands in order to diversify current economy to allow for year round, sustainable employment.</li></ul>



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

Firstly, it is essential to note that Eigg is itself distinct from many other islands due to the fact that it is community owned. It is evident that the islanders are extremely proud of this, and that it has encouraged a diverse, and innovative community to flourish in the island. However, it was also stated that a revision of current policy is necessary to allow for better support for community owned islands, with a need for a dedicated strategy which takes into consideration the uniqueness of the situation on the island both during the buyout phase, and after.

In terms of economic development, the infrastructure on Eigg is currently limited by the water and electricity supply, which also negatively impacts on housing. The current electricity system (as owned and operated by Eigg Electric) is in need of maintenance and upgrading, in order to guarantee long term sustainable energy for current and future needs. It was suggested that a complete rethink of government policy is needed, in order to ensure that local energy generation is promoted over national generation, and that small, aspiring green communities, such as Eigg, are given the correct support to sustain and improve current infrastructure in order to flourish. Consequently, it is essential that Scottish Government engage with local authorities to develop a strategy for renewables in consultation with island communities.



It is also evident that housing and diversifying the economy 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. From a housing perspective, social homes for life are key to an island focused housing strategy. The “market” cannot be relied upon as a means of providing homes that are affordable. In fact, in a community where the population is growing like on Eigg, the market does the opposite – it pushes prices up, making houses less affordable to buy or to invest in if a member of the community has bought one. They become second homes or homes to those who have retired and use their capital to relocate or down-size. The “market” is and will kill communities. Scottish Government needs to develop strategies for social housing on a scale and of a quality that means people want to live and stay in a place. It is important that they’re not second class to their home-owning neighbors. Participants to the consultation have a vision of an island community where there are more homes being rented than owned, which could lead to a stable and growing resident population. Another challenge for housing on Eigg is its location, which is also a huge block with an additional 20% to 40% more going onto the cost of building a house on the island because of having to import materials and often labour.

When it comes to economy diversification, there needs to be opportunities for people to be employed (and to be employers) rather than the emphasis currently being on being self-employed or starting a micro-business. It is not just about diversifying the economy, it’s also about growing and strengthening existing businesses so that they can employ those who are too young, have too few skills or lack confidence or capital to start up on their own.

The link between housing and diversification and strength of the economy was made abundantly clear by the participants to the consultation. Without housing the economy can’t grow and Eigg can’t grow its housing stock because its economy isn’t big/strong/diverse enough. 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. Support is needed to encourage an expansion and diversification



of the current economy, which includes the recognition of past and current efforts of islanders to improve their current situation, and there is also a need for the development of an island focused housing policy that creates locally affordable housing stock, which is tailored to the needs of specific islands.

Finally, the aim of going 'Carbon Zero', has the potential to be revolutionary for the island. However, in order for this to occur, there has to be an immediate revision of the current recycling/waste disposal system as operated by Highland Council, in order to ensure that it fully takes into account the unique needs, and environmentally friendly aims, of the island community. Additionally, there is a need for a recognition by the Scottish Government of the potential that islands such as Eigg have to be innovators of a green, circular economy - which should be subsequently supported by additional policy and funding opportunities.



## What now?



First and foremost we wish to thank those who attended the consultation events on Eigg. 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 Eigg

<b>-Depopulation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of affordable housing</li> <li>• Infrastructure</li> <li>• More electricity</li> </ul>	<b>-Economic Development</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable island income</li> <li>• More job opportunities</li> <li>• Water supply &amp; electric expansion</li> <li>• Supporting sustainable local enterprise</li> <li>• Improved infrastructure</li> </ul>	<b>-Transport</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Links with mainland transport</li> <li>• Ferry service should reflect island needs (island proofed)</li> <li>• Water taxi (and other additional transport options)</li> <li>• Efficient, reliable, sustainable transport links with funding for the future</li> <li>• Better roads</li> <li>• Green transport systems</li> </ul>
<b>- Community Empowerment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having a veto on unwanted development</li> <li>• More autonomy</li> <li>• Support for community governance</li> <li>• Childcare</li> <li>• More support for community owned &amp; operated services</li> <li>• Island input into corporate business strategies that affect island future</li> </ul>	<b>- Environmental protection</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better recycling &amp; waste management</li> <li>• Carbon zero</li> <li>• Action based solutions against climate change</li> <li>• Rewilding</li> <li>• Habitat preservation &amp; conservation</li> </ul>	<b>-Health and wellbeing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better access to healthcare</li> <li>• Swimming pool</li> </ul>

<p><b>-Fuel poverty</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More electricity</li> </ul>	<p><b>-Land management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land management policies specific to community ownership</li> </ul>	<p><b>-Other</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community island fire plan/strategy</li> <li>• Local food security</li> <li>• Ecologically sustainable agriculture/aquaculture</li> <li>• Resilience</li> <li>• Preservation of culture &amp; heritage</li> <li>• Independent Scotland</li> <li>• More amenities</li> </ul>
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