

Gigha Report



Island: Gigha

Date: 21/05/2019

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 Gigha. 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 21 May 2019 a consultation event took place on Gigha between 7:30pm and 9:30pm. 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 Gigha. 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.

Gigha as a great place to live

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

- Great place for children
- Clean environment
- Community spirit
- Achamore Gardens
- Quality of life



Gigha is valued by the participants to the consultation event as a great place to raise children where safety, community spirit and, overall, quality of life stand out as great assets for those living on the island. Gigha is well known for the island community buy out that took place back in 2002. This led to a sense of empowerment on the island and is still today one of the aspects that Gigha is well known for.

Challenges on Gigha

The consultation moved on to discuss the current challenges on Gigha 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
- Modern sports ground and facilities
- Art installations
- Heritage centre
- Education facilities from 3 to 60
- School upgraded



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
- Digital Connectivity
- Land management
- Environment

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 Gigha:

Challenge	Suggestion from participants
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilitation of an integrated approach to transport by bringing together all relevant stakeholders (service providers, public bodies and island community as users) ▪ Promotion of community buses ▪ Promotion of car sharing awareness
Digital connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frame digital connectivity as a lifeline of the island community and not just an economic service
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a regular large item uplift system • Explore ways to reduce traffic on Gigha



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of an effective waste management system for the island • Explore ways to improve island’s accessibility (opening up inaccessible areas) whilst protecting areas of critical importance for the environment
Land management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the possibility of reducing the costs for local buyers for the sale of land to be less than the district value

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

Firstly, the community buy out on Gigha has presented people on the island with tremendous opportunities. It has allowed them to take decisions that shape their future and to take their island forward. Gigha is actually an island that over the past 20 years has increased its population. However, the community buy out has also led to financial challenges that the people on Gigha are dealing with creatively but for which more action is needed. One area that was raised as problematic is the challenge in being able to sell houses under the market price, which is preventing young people from buying on the island. (Renewable) energy has clearly had a transformation role on Gigha. It has not only provided the island with green energy, but it has also provided much needed income to the island.

Secondly, digital connectivity is poor on the island and this prevents a plethora of activities, from pupils doing their homework properly to businesses to establish themselves and run from Gigha.



There needs to be a policy rethink of digital connectivity not just as an economic service, but as an essential lifeline for the community.

Thirdly, transport on the island and from the mainland to the island has been highlighted as a challenge. Integrated timetables between ferries and buses on the mainland with thoughts on how to get people from the ferry slip to the bus in the village would be welcome. However, this challenge highlights a wider issue, which is about encouraging and putting place a forum (a place for discussing a solution to the challenge) where service providers, public bodies and users (island community) can meet effectively.

Fourthly, the environment is also what makes Gigha (and other islands) great. But not just any environment, a clean and healthy environment. People living on the islands feel that waste management should improve drastically, especially for large items. At the same time, the island may lose its character if too many cars come on it in the tourist season, so suggestions were made of exploring the possibility of making Gigha a car free island. This aspect of protecting the environment is heavily linked to improving transport, which could benefit from a community bus system. Land management is heavily linked to the environment, with participants recommending that more of the island is opened up to locals and visitors, but safeguarding indigenous flora and fauna.

One last comment was made about the need to make Gigha more productive. Farming was once much greater on Gigha than it is currently. One of the challenges here is the lack of a local abattoir. One solution that has been suggested is for a mobile abattoir to visit the island, which would allow farmers to locally slaughter their livestock rather than having to send them on lengthy and costly journeys. Fish farming is also being considered and, while it could provide much needed jobs (although it is unclear how many) and economic development, there needs to be a balance with the environmental concerns that activities such as fish farming raise within the population.



What now?

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

-Depopulation	-Economic Development	-Transport
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Facilities for youth on the island ➤ Sustainable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ More sustainable jobs ➤ More employment opportunities ➤ Increased renewables ➤ 100% renewables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Joined up public transport ➤ Ferry to island ➤ Free ferry ➤ Tunnels and bridges ➤ Better access to mainland by air and sea ➤ Better roads ➤ New or updated road ➤ Better airstrip ➤ Joined up coach service ➤ Government backed electric vehicle ➤ Cheaper ferry services for islanders ➤ Courier service visiting island ➤ Pony and trap taxi service ➤ Teleport hubs ☑ ➤ Better and more ferry services



<p>-Digital Connectivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Better broadband!!! ➤ Superfast broadband ➤ Digital connectivity that works with no more dead zones ➤ Make BT accountable for the quality of its services or lack of ➤ Better broadband ➤ Digital connectivity to support living and working ➤ High speed internet 	<p>- Environmental protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pathways opened up ➤ Road side ditch clearance ➤ More bins and more dog poo bins ➤ Retain Gigha's natural beauty ➤ Footpath and cycle tracks ➤ Better recycling ➤ Island recycling (that works) ➤ Recycle plastic roads ➤ Self sufficient for power and water 	<p>Land management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ditches and drainage system working ➤ Hutting (building without planning permission with permission of the land owner if it's not for permanent residency) ➤ Free land for islanders ➤ Festivals ➤ Giant dome above Achamore Gardens (midge free) ➤ Better community facilities for all ages
<p>-Community empowerment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Community control over and above the council ➤ Community hub for all ages 	<p>-Fuel poverty</p>	
<p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Education facilities from 3 to 60 ➤ School upgraded 	<p>Art installations</p>	<p>Health and well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Nursing home ➤ Library ➤ Indoor swimming pool



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Range of all health facilities ➤ Assisted living for young and old ➤ Fitness/sports centre (Modern sports ground and facilities) ➤ Improved medical facilities
Heritage centre		

