

Iona and the Ross of Mull Report



Island: Iona and the Ross of Mull

Date: 30/04/2019

This report has been produced by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law and Governance (SCELG) and Scottish Islands Federation (SIF) in the framework of 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 Iona & the Ross of Mull. 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 30th April 2019 a consultation event took place in Iona Library between 2.30pm and 5pm. The event was attended by 18 people and the goal was to capture both what works well on the island and the challenges faced by the community on Iona & the Ross of Mull. 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.

Iona and the Ross of Mull as a great place to live

The consultation highlighted the following things that make living on Iona & the Ross of Mull great:

- Safe and secure
- Great environment
- Community spirit
- Inspiring Landscape
- Wildlife
- Easily accessible
- Access to creative arts
- Lots of activities

It is evident that there are many things that make Iona and the Ross of Mull 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, that islanders enjoy the natural beauty of the landscape and the wildlife it supports, that there are lots of activities and groups to become involved with which is crucial to a vital island community and that the safe and crime free environment are fundamental to islanders way of life. It is also worth noting that the variety of people that visit the island is viewed in a positive light and is an interesting element of island life; to quote one participant '*the world comes to us*'.



Challenges on Iona & the Ross of Mull

The consultation moved on to discuss the current challenges on Iona & the Ross of Mull 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
- Transport
- Digital Connectivity
- Fuel Poverty
- Land Management
- Biosecurity
- Housing
- Fair postage & delivery
- Education



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
- Environment
- Transport

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 Iona & the Ross of Mull:

Challenge	Suggestion from participants
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and implement an island focused housing policy that creates locally affordable housing stock. ▪ Policy acknowledgement that the housing challenge on the islands is critical and urgent and different from the mainland, and needs to be developed based on the needs and knowledge of island communities. ▪ Explore the feasibility of introducing a tax on holiday homes and second homes ▪ Recognise the positive ripple effect that an island focused housing strategy will have on the sustainability of the islands and their repopulation



Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Legal requirement for community input into revision of integrated transport timetabling ▪ Explore the possibility of revising current policy in relation to pier ownership & maintenance to ensure minimum standards are maintained. ▪ 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).
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Renewable energy island policy that focuses on how best to utilise renewable energy potential on islands to ensure that it benefits island economy. ▪ Explore the possibility of ensuring there is an onsite recycling centre on every island. ▪ Ensure biosecurity funding is secured post Brexit to protect current native species and environmental system in general.

Iona and the Ross of Mull 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 Iona & the Ross of Mull we have identified the following specific traits to Iona & the Ross of Mull:

Firstly, it is evident that the lack of affordable, fit for purpose housing is a major issue on Mull and Iona. It is an issue which, if solved, will have 'ripple effects'. This means that if measures are put in place to deal with this "specific" issue, it will inevitably have wider positive effects. In other words, by improving housing, economic development will also improve, which, in the long term, will stop depopulation. Housing requires radical changes to policy emphasizing the right to housing and promoting financial and other incentives to those house owners who put their

second homes on the long term rental market, whilst simultaneously fixing a fair level of taxation for the aforementioned homeowners. It is also essential that any revisal of policy is done to properly incorporate the local knowledge of housing needs by islanders, with appropriate support put in place to allow island housing development to be a community led endeavor.

Transport, and particularly ferry timetabling and pier maintenance, is also an issue which, if improved, would have transformative effects for the islands. It is essential that current transport policy is reviewed to adequately take into account the importance of a reliable, well integrated transport system that puts the need of island communities first, before that of visitors. Additionally, the current minimum standards for pier infrastructure, and pier ownership, need to be revised in order to ensure a specific quality standard is regularly maintained.

It is also evident that maintaining and protecting the current environment of both Iona and the Ross of Mull is essential to the island communities. This requires concrete assurances from government that current biodiversity funding will continue post-brexit, in order to protect against invasive non-native species. Additionally, it is crucial that the potential of islands to act as hubs of innovation for both recycling and renewable energy generation are recognised at policy level. This includes the need to provide on-island recycling facilities, with a view to promoting a circular economy, as well as revising current renewable energy policy and funding to ensure that renewable energy potential is harnessed to benefit the island community.

What now?



First and foremost we wish to thank those who attended the consultation events on Iona and the Ross of Mull. 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 Iona & the Ross of Mull

<p>-Depopulation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable housing • Social housing 	<p>-Economic Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase building, electrical, plumbing etc. skills base. • Assistance in diversification from tourist based economy • Need for 'repair shop' (household items, electrical goods, etc.) to avoid unnecessary waste • Could include tool library and training • Convert Tobermory into dark skies observatory • World class aquarium to highlight marine splendour 	<p>-Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated and improved transport • Ferries that work and are reliable • Affordable frequent bus service • Sunday service to run same as during the week • More frequent public transport • Accessible pier/breakwater open to public
<p>-Digital Connectivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<p>- Environmental Wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater opportunity to make use of environment to encourage research and training. • Ferries to run on renewable energy • Improve recycling • Renewable energy • Self sustainable • Care share • Assistance in disposing of agricultural waste and blue bin items 	<p>-Health and wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanent GP • Local general healthcare • State of the art dentistry • More eateries open all year round
<p>-Community empowerment</p>	<p>-Fuel poverty</p>	<p>-Land management</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More listening by Argyll and Bute council • And not being kept in the dark • Local ownership of pollical process • Playpark and games 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in renewable technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A tennis court
<p>-Biosecurity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully resourced conservation team to tackle invasive species 	<p>-Affordable Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Especially for young people 	<p>-Local Food and drink industry</p>
<p>-Fair Postage & Delivery</p>	<p>-Challenge Island restrictions instead of accepting them</p>	