

Islay Report



Island: Islay

Date: 16/04/2019

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 Islay. 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 April 2019 a consultation event took place in Bowmore between 7:30pm and 9:30pm. The event was attended by 33 people and the goal was to capture both what works well on the island and the challenges faced by the community on Islay. 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.

Islay as a great place to live

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

- Good Primary Schools
- Community Spirit
- Environment (includes natural/physical)
- Safe Environment
- Culture (including heritage and history)
- Pace of Life
- Local Food and Drink
- Excellent Healthcare
- Safe and Secure



There are so many things that make living on Islay great. The list above just scratches the surface but it does highlight an island where there is a true sense of community, where people feel safe,



where beauty surrounds everyday life and where culture (including food and beverage) stands out.

Challenges on Islay

The consultation moved on to discuss the current challenges on Islay 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 Levels
- Economic Development
- Environmental Protection
- Health and wellbeing
- Community empowerment
- Transport
- Digital Connectivity
- Fuel Poverty
- Land Management
- Biosecurity
- Housing
- Local energy generation
- Islay nationalizes whisky
- Education
- Farmers and local produce



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:

- Housing
- Health
- Transport
- Digital Connectivity

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 Islay:

Challenge	Suggestion from participants
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build more physical housing. ▪ Secure reliable and affordable essential services (water and energy) with funding that takes into account the remoteness. ▪ Implementation of a land reform policy in a way that fully takes into account island issues and rurality. ▪ Proper implementation of the Islands (Scotland) Act and accountability of the public sector. ▪ Revamp, reform or implementation of a Scottish housing policy to full take into account island communities interests.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revisit tourism policy in such a way that it does not disadvantage the communities where tourism is popular but promotes sustainable tourism.
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devolving the decision making to the local level recognising that one size does not fit all. Lobby UK government so that fiscal benefits from the whisky industry are reinvested where they are generated.
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and reform of the ferry/public buses (transport policy) in line with island communities' interests and priorities and capable of servicing the needs of the island, which means an island base ferry service.
Digital connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equity and fairness component of digital nationwide policy so that communities on islands (but also rural areas) are taken into account first when a new system is put in place. Focus of SG on innovation and technology.

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

Firstly, Islay is in some ways unique due to the presence of the whisky industry on it. While the latter has helped put Islay on the map, so to say, its profits could and should be more evenly spread in order to promote the sustainable economic development of the island. Currently, the taxation system of the whisky industry prevents fiscal revenues coming from a multibillion

industry to be used to improve essential services on Islay. There needs to be a recognition that a sector that benefits from the natural resources present on Islay and by its association with Islay needs to be able to provide further economic and social input to the island, in addition to the jobs and visibility it does give the island.

Secondly, sectors like transport and health and well-being highlight the discrepancy and ineffectiveness of policies adopted and sought by non-islanders. There is the need for a ferry fleet that is fit for purpose and with distilleries increasing their production and the rise in commercial vehicle traffic the impacts on island residents and tourists need to be fully taken into account. There is, hence, a need to revisit transport and health and well-being policies in a way that they are driven by island communities. The latter should be the actors driving such policies and not only mere recipients. This really reveals a wider dissatisfaction with community empowerment and local governance. Decisions need to be taken as close as possible to where the effects will be felt. Island communities need to be at the heart of their governance.

Thirdly, digital connectivity and housing need to be adapted and reconsidered having island communities at the heart of such policies. The provision of affordable housing for local people or incoming workers is absolutely essential. 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. If that is the case, such communities will always fall into the cracks of statistics of the 5% that are not reached in what is a considerably positive statistic nationwide. From an island community perspective being part of that 5% is not acceptable and a revised digital connectivity and housing policy needs to appreciate the importance of these two areas for island communities and put their conditions at the front of nationwide benchmarks and indicators.



What now?

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

-Depopulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Housing ➤ Keep youth ➤ Whisky fund ➤ Financial help for first child for couples living 2 years in Islay 	-Economic Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Support housing needs for next generation ➤ Shopping company competition ➤ A more diverse economy offering well paid jobs ➤ Cost of living is an issue ➤ Whisky fund ➤ Alternative energy developments 	-Transport <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ferries ➤ Roads ➤ Mainland connection ➤ Fuel costs ➤ Flight costs ➤ Tunnel/bridge to mainland
-Digital Connectivity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Broadband ➤ 5G 	- Environmental protection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Environmental Control ➤ Protection of special areas ➤ Campervan hookups ➤ Renewables ➤ Carbon footprint of the whisky industry 	-Health and wellbeing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Craic & ceilidh ➤ Improve sports facilities ➤ Good employment opportunities to match educational achievements ➤ Improved local democracy



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Sheltered homes for elderly ➤ Recognition of limited healthcare
-Community empowerment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Tourism infrastructure improvements ➤ Local people making key decisions ➤ Support for young families (financial, educational, childcare, housing, business set up) ➤ Community meeting places (relevant to young people) 	-Fuel poverty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Renewable/affordable energy ➤ Cost of living i.e. haulage costs 	-Land management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Available & affordable land for young folk to build. ➤ Support young farmers ➤ Apprenticeships (farm, fish, traditional industries, environmental studies) ➤ Land reform (to give young people a stake in their island)
-Biosecurity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Invasive species ➤ Protect biodiversity ➤ Biomass and hydrogen. 	-Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lack of affordable housing ➤ Stop/reduce 2nd holiday homes ➤ Cap on corporate business buying all affordable housing. 	-Local energy generation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Carbon footprint ➤ Hydropower vehicles



-Islay nationalize whisky <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Give whisky tax back	-Education <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Special needs➤ Secondary➤ Primary➤ School trips budget	-Farmers and local produce <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Let abattoir be open more often
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