

Kerrera Report



Island: Kerrera

Date: 09/07/2019

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 Kerrera. 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 the 9th of June 2019 a focus group was held on Kerrera, which was attended by 10 people. The goal was to capture both what works well on the island and the challenges faced by the community on Kerrera. 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.

Kerrera as a great place to live

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

- Young Population
- Accessible Isolation
- Island life but easy access to mainland
- Marina
- Community
- Economic potential
- Environment
- Housing
- Safety



It is evident that there are many things that make Kerrera 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 residents also appreciating the uniqueness of its geographic situation; a definitive island community, that sits just off the mainland with direct access by ferry ('accessible isolation'). The participants also highlighted that they particularly enjoy the natural environment of the island, and specifically mentioned that the demographic of the island population (68 people total, 18 of which are children who are mostly under 8 and primary school age) was a positive contributing factor.



The consultation moved on to discuss the current challenges on Kerrera and the main concerns of the island community. The following are the main issues that were shared by the participants at the event:

- Increasing Population Levels
- Economic Development
- Environmental Protection
- Health and Wellbeing
- Transport
- Digital Connectivity
- Waste Management



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:

- Economic Development
- 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 Barra:

| Challenge | Suggestion from participants |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Economic Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recognise that boosting economic development on an island requires joint thinking with other policies such as, for example, transport. ▪ Revise essential services to ensure that they are appropriately island proofed in order to retain/increase jobs in local economy. |
| Transport | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider the possibility of developing an island focused/centric transport policy that benefits island communities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For Kerrera, this would include ensuring that the ferry service is viewed as a lifeline service with priority given to island residents and a revision of the current parking policy on the mainland to increase capacity and provide islander discount. |



| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development of legally binding minimum requirements for road infrastructure that builds upon the needs of island communities. ▪ Legal requirement for community input into revision of integrated transport timetabling with increased frequency of ferry crossings and revised bus timetabling. |
| <p>Digital Connectivity</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recognise digital connectivity as a lifeline to island residents, and ensure service providers view connectivity as a lifeline rather than just as an economic service. ▪ Equity and fairness component of digital nationwide policy so that communities on islands are taken into account first when a new system is put in place. ▪ Consider the development of minimum legally binding requirements in relation to digital connectivity, starting from the periphery. |

Kerrera 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 Kerrera we have identified the following specific traits to Barra:

At present, residents of Kerrera feel that the economic development of the island is being logistically constrained by Argyll and Bute Council, particularly in relation to the introduction of parking fines on the mainland carpark and a lack of a residents parking rate. Additionally, the agricultural business suffers due to the difficult logistics of moving heavy freight on and off the island; there is now the ability to have a heavy freight option six times a year (as arranged by residents themselves), but for many residents this is still inadequate and it is evident that more

frequent heavy freight crossings would be welcomed. In general, it is crucial that policy's and strategies, such as the introduction of the mainland parking fines, are island proofed to ensure that they take into consideration the nuances of island living in comparison to the mainland. It is vital that essential services are revised to ensure that they are appropriately island proofed in order to retain/increase jobs in the local economy.

Additionally, the importance of consistent, reliable digital connectivity on the island, and the positive ripple effect it will have on both economic development and general wellbeing, must be recognised. At present, connectivity across the entire island is generally poor, with some areas receiving no signal at all. Recognising digital connectivity as a lifeline to island residents, and opening dialogue with service providers, with the possibility of introducing legal minimum requirements for all island areas, could have a transformative effect for the community.

Finally, residents of Kerrera specified that the issue of transport, both in terms of the current road infrastructure and ferry service, are a major challenge to living on the island. In terms of the road, at present the island is currently divided by the lack of an adequate road between the North and South ends; resulting in unwanted segregation of residents and a lack of accessibility to facilities at the North end (shopping, marina, afterschool care) by those who live in the South. Additionally, the stretches of road that are in place are very poorly maintained by Argyll and Bute Council, which adds an extra burden to those traveling for lifeline services, and particularly for the elderly or ill who suffer with mobility issues. Participants also highlighted the downfall of the current ferry service, in that the current ferry is not fit for purpose; it lacks capacity (can't fit ambulance and not good for vehicles) and is not reliable due to breakdowns. This is particularly evident during tourist season, when residents struggle to make the short crossing to the mainland due to a lack of capacity. Furthermore, the current timetable means that any evening activities on the mainland are not doable, which restricts hospital visits and curtails the social aspect or the younger members of the community. On the mainland itself, the bus service and current capacity of the car park are also inadequate, indicating that although on-island services



should be improved, it is also crucial that mainland sectors which relate to these services are also revised concurrently to ensure they support the needs of the island community.

It should also be noted that a privately run ferry operates successfully for those who live in the North end of Kerrera. However, there is a general feeling that there is a lack of support for this service within Argyll and Bute Council, and that more could be done to recognize its importance as a lifeline service to ensure its longevity.



What now?

First and foremost we wish to thank those who attended the consultation events on Kerrera. 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/>