



Lismore Report



Island: Lismore

Date: 10/07/2019

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 Lismore. 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.

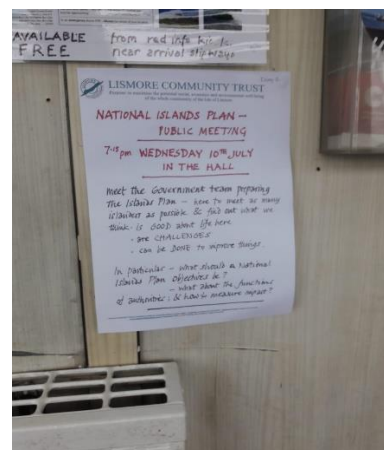
Introduction

On the 10th of July 2019 a National Island Plan consultation event took place on Lismore, which was attended by 19 people. The goal was to capture both what works well on the island and the challenges faced by the community on Lismore. 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.

Lismore as a great place to live

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

- Sense of community
- Environment, scenery & landscape
- Infrastructure
- Safety
- Connections to mainland
- Peace and tranquility
- Farming island



It is evident that there are many things that make Lismore a fantastic place to live. The list above only offers a glimpse, but it does indicate that there is a supportive community on the island, which also affords a high level of safety for residents. Additionally, island residents value the natural environment of the island, whilst the current connections to the mainland (in terms of distance and time) were hailed as a positive by participants to the event. This was highlighted further by the focus on environmental protection throughout the consultation event, which specifically included in depth discussion regarding sustainable food security and organic farming practices.



The consultation moved on to discuss the current challenges on Lismore 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
- Land Management
- Digital Connectivity
- Fuel Poverty
- Biosecurity
- Volunteer Fatigue
- Farming Subsidies



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:

- Depopulation
- Economic Development
- Digital Connectivity
- 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 Lismore:

Challenge	Suggestion from participants
Increased Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Revisal of current housing policy taking into account the specific needs of the island community. ▪ Explore ways to incentive second home owners to integrate their homes into the local market when they are not in use. ▪ Revise current planning policy to ensure that it is appropriately island proofed. ▪ Provide support for the community to explore the possibility of using legislation (such as the Land Reform and Community Empowerment Acts) to acquire community owned land.



<p>Economic Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise that boosting economic development on an island requires joint thinking with other policies and opportunities beyond those directly focusing on the island. • Ensure that current regulations are appropriately island proofed to encourage the economic potential of Scottish islands. • Provide support for island communities to explore economic opportunities within their islands.
<p>Transport</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Revise current transport services with a focus on island community needs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For Lismore, this should include the exploration of the building of a safer, more sheltered harbour and a ferry service with extended operating hours. ▪ 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"> ▪ Developing minimum legally binding requirements starting from the periphery. ▪ Review how R100 programme plans to improve digital connectivity on Lismore. ▪ Explore the possibility of conducting a feasibility study into the possibility of a fibre optic cable from the mainland.



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

Firstly, the issue of increasing the population of Lismore in a sustainable manner was highlighted as being absolutely crucial to the longevity of the island community, and very much reliant on improving the current housing shortage on the island. At present, participants indicated that there is a distinct lack of housing and available land for small holdings/crofts, whilst the current market is saturated with holiday homes. Increasing the amount of available, fit for purpose housing available on the island is vital. A revision of current housing and planning policy to take into account the specific needs of island residents, and additional support for the Lismore community in relation to potential avenues that promote land reform, with simultaneous incentives to encourage second home owners to make their homes available to the local market, would greatly increase the housing stock on Lismore and subsequently allow for more families to move or return to the island permanently. It should also be noted that participants highlighted that it is essential that all local facilities are improved/increased to adequately accommodate any population increase.

The issues of transport is all encompassing, and includes the lack of shelter provide by the current harbour; an improved ferry service with joined up timetabling to rail links; a current lack of on island road maintenance and the absence of cycle paths on the island. It is evident that there needs to be an urgent rethink of current transport strategies at policy level, to ensure that they are driven by island communities, and that they are recognised as being a 'lifeline' service for islanders rather than just an economic service. For Lismore, this includes exploring the possibility of extending the current ferry timetable and investigating the safety of the current





harbour. Additionally, residents indicated that an improvement to the current roads on the island (with additional passing places included) and the provision of a cycle track would have transformative effects for the community, and positively influence the health and wellbeing of residents as well as the economic development of the island.

In relation to economic development, participants made it clear that they currently feel that the local economy is severely constrained due to inflexible rules and regulations that do not take into consideration the uniqueness of island life (specific mention was given to planning, housing and development control regulations). It is vital that that Scottish Government recognises that boosting economic development on an island requires joint thinking with other policies such as, for example, housing, transport, digital connectivity. Additionally, in order to allow the full potential of island economies to be realised, current law and policy must be revised to ensure that it is appropriately island proofed and not acting as an unnecessary barrier or deterrent to those wishing to either run a business or undertake employment on islands.

In a world where digital connectivity has become crucial to both everyday life and the needs of businesses, it is essential that island residents have improved connectivity. Currently, connectivity is inconsistent and generally poor across Lismore. There needs be to a revision to the current policies focusing on minimum legally binding standards based on an effective outside in approach, where rural connectivity is ensured before it reaches the mainland and urban areas.

Finally, it should be noted that several participants indicated that all of above mentioned actions must be taken in light of the current climate change emergency, and should only be developed if the also protect the natural beauty and environment of the island in a sustainable manner.





What now?

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

